

THE PTOLEMIES OF EGYPT

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Head of a Ptolemaic King

(University of Pennsylvania Museum, Philadelphia)

THE PTOLEMIES OF EGYPT

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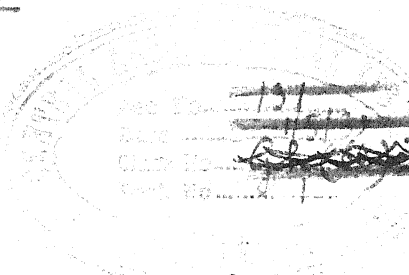
by

Lieut.-Colonel

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“Antiquity is like Fame: *caput inter nubila condit*,
her head is muffled from our sight.”

Advancement of Learning.—BACON.

PREFACE.

THIS book is intended less for the student than for the general reader. The period has become highly specialized: the administrative and economic conditions of Ptolemaic Egypt have been exhaustively reviewed. Textbooks treating of these and kindred subjects exist, and it would be superfluous to add to their number. But the kings and queens of the period, virile if not specially virtuous rulers, have received less attention, and it is in the hope of rescuing from oblivion their personality that this book has been written.

The story is intricate, the earlier chronology uncertain. Classical literature is sometimes obscure, sometimes contradictory, and contemporary documents are usually disappointing. The first refers to Egypt only in so far as its history affects the history of Rome: the second concern only village life.

Many distinguished scholars have been at pains to pierce the darkness that until recently enveloped the social conditions of Ptolemaic Egypt. Mahaffy, Bevan, Tarn, Grenfell, Hunt, Griffiths, Edgar, Petrie, and J. de M. Johnson are among the Englishmen, Bouché-Leclercq, Jouguet, Maspero, Couat, among the Frenchmen, Strack, Wilcken, Otto, Plaumann, and Junker among the Germans, Breccia, Adriani, Botti, and Lumbroso among the Italians, Rostovtzeff among the Russians; and Westermann among the Americans. And a younger generation is pressing upon the heels of these men: notably Grace Macurdy and Sherman Wallace of the United States; Gueraud, a Frenchman; Gabra and Noshi, two Egyptians. In short, labourers in the field are so numerous that a volume would be needed to contain their names, as the bibliographies appended to Jouguet's *Précis de l'Histoire d'Égypte* and the *Cambridge Ancient History*, sufficiently testify. To this legion

PREFACE

of distinguished scholars, living and dead, I tender my respectful acknowledgments and thanks for the profit I have derived from their labours.

I am also indebted to the keepers and trustees of many institutions, notably the British, Ashmolean, and Soane Museums, the Museum of Antiquities of Cairo, the Greco-Roman Museum of Alexandria, the Bibliothèque Nationale of Paris, the Museo Nazionale of Naples, and the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek Museum of Copenhagen, for advice and for permission to publish the illustrations that accompany the text.

P. G. ELGOOD.

HELIOPOLIS,
EGYPT, 1938.

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FAMILY TABLE OF PTOLEMIES. 323 B.C.—30 B.C.

PTOLEMY (son of Lagus) SOTER, *b.* 367; satrap 323; king 305-285. *d.* 283. *m.*

	$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} 1. \text{ Artacama, } d. \text{ of Artabazus, } 324. \\ 2. \text{ Eurydice, } d. \text{ of Antipater, } cir. \\ \quad 321. \\ 3. \text{ BERENICE I., widow of Philip,} \\ \quad \text{ a Macedonian, before } 316. \end{array} \right.$
--	---

and had issue :—

By Eurydice.

(*a*) Ptolemy Coraunus,

k. of Macedon, 281-80.

(*b*) Ptolemais, *m.* Demetrius
Poliorcestes.

(*c*) Lysandra I, *m.* Agathocles,
son of Lysimachus, king of Thrace.

By BERENICE I.

(*a*) ARSINOË II.

b. before 315.

(*b*) Philotera.

(*c*) PTOLEMY PHILADELPHUS.

(*d*) ARGÆUS.

$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} 1. \text{ Lysimachus of Thrace.} \end{array} \right.$

m.

$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} 2. \text{ PTOLEMY PHILADELPHUS} \\ \quad \text{(brother).} \end{array} \right.$

PTOLEMY PHILADELPHUS, *b.* 309, *k.* 285-247. *m.*

	$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} 1. \text{ ARSINOË I., } d. \text{ of Lysimachus of Thrace.} \\ 2. \text{ ARSINOË (PHILADELPHUS) II., sister, } cir. \text{ } 278, \text{ } d. \text{ } 269. \end{array} \right.$
--	--

Had issue :—

By ARSINOË I.

(*a*) PTOLEMY EVERGETES I.

(*b*) Lysimachus. Murdered 221 by Ptolemy Philopator.

(*c*) Berenice, *m.* Antiochus II, *cir.* 252. Murdered 246 by Laodice of Syria.

FAMILY TABLE OF PTOLEMIES. 323 B.C.—30 B.C.—(Continued).

PTOLEMY EUERGETES I, *b. cir.* 277; *k.* 247-221. *m.* BERENICE II *d.* of Magas of Cyrene, *cir.* 247.
Murdered 221 by Ptolemy Philopator.

Had issue:—

- (a) Berenice, *d.* March, 238.
- (b) PTOLEMY PHILOPATOR, *b. cir.* 244.
- (c) Magas. Murdered 221 by Ptolemy Philopator.
- (d) ARSINOË III.

PTOLEMY PHILOPATOR, *b. cir.* 244; *k.* 221-203. *m.* ARSINOË III (sister) *cir.* 211.
Murdered 204.

Had issue:—

PTOLEMY EPIPHANES, *b.* 209.

PTOLEMY EPIPHANES, *b.* 209; *k.* 203-181. *m.* CLEOPATRA I, *d.* of Antiochus III of Syria 193/2, *d. cir.* 172.

Had issue:—

- (a) PTOLEMY PHILOMETOR, *b. cir.* 186.
- (b) PTOLEMY EUERGETES II, *b. cir.* 185.
- (c) CLEOPATRA II, *b.* before 181.

PTOLEMY PHILOMETOR, *b. cir.* 186; *k.* 181-145. *m.* CLEOPATRA II (sister), *cir.* 172, *d. cir.* 118.

Had issue:—

- (a) Ptolemy Eupator, *d.* early.
- (b) Cleopatra Thea, *m.*

{	1. Alexander Balas 2. Demetrius Nicator 3. Antiochus VII
---	--

 } kings of Syria.
- (c) CLEOPATRA III, *m.* EUERGETES II (uncle) 143. Reigned alone, 116, for some months.
- (d) Ptolemy Neos Philopator. Murdered by EUERGETES II.

FAMILY TABLE OF PTOLEMIES. 323 B.C.—30 B.C.—(Continued).

PTOLEMY EUERGETES II, *b. cir.* 185; *k.* 169/8-163 Egypt. *m.* { 1. CLEOPATRA II (sister), 145.
163-145 Cyrenaica. { 2. CLEOPATRA III (niece), *cir.* 143.
145-116 Egypt *d.* 101.
(except a few months 130/129).

Had issue:—

By CLEOPATRA II.

- (a) Memphites, *b.* 144. Murdered by Euergetes II.

By CLEOPATRA III.

- (a) PTOLEMY SOTER II, *b. cir.* 142.
- (b) TRYPHAENA, *m.* Antiochus VIII Grypus. Murdered 111.
{ 1. Ptolemy Soter II (brother) before 115.
(c) CLEOPATRA IV, *m.* { 2. Antiochus IX. Cyzenicus 115.

By an unknown woman.
(a) Ptolemy Apion, *k.* of Cyrenaica, 116-96.

Murdered 112.

(d) PTOLEMY ALEXANDER I.

- (e) CLEOPATRA V. SELENE, *m.* { 1. Ptolemy Soter II (brother) before 112/111.
2. Antiochus VIII Grypus, before 102.
3. Antiochus IX Cyzenicus, 96.
4. Antiochus Euzebes, 95.

CLEOPATRA II, *b.* before 181, reigned alone 130/129 *m.* { 1. Ptolemy Philometor (brother), 172.
For her issue, *v. ant.* { 2. Ptolemy Euergetes (brother), 145.

CLEOPATRA III. Reigned as Consort 116-101. For her issue, *v. ant.*

PTOLEMY SOTER II Lathyrus, *b. cir.* 142, *k.* 116-106 Egypt. *m.* { 1. Cleopatra IV (sister), before 115.
106-88 Cyprus { 2. Cleopatra V Selene (sister), before 112/11.
88-80 Egypt.

Had issue:—

By CLEOPATRA IV or CLEOPATRA V. SELENE.

- (a) (Cleopatra) BERENICE III, *m.* { 1. PTOLEMY ALEXANDER I (uncle).
Murdered by Alexander II, 80. { 2. PTOLEMY ALEXANDER II (cousin), 80.

By unknown woman.

- (a) Ptolemy, *k.* of Cyprus 80-58.
- (b) PTOLEMY NEVS DIONYSUS.
- (c) CLEOPATRA VI, Tryphaena.
- (d) CLEOPATRA.

FAMILY TABLE OF PTOLEMIES. 323 B.C.—30 B.C.—(Continued).

PTOLEMY ALEXANDER I, b. after 142, k. 114-108 Cyprus. m. { 1. (Unknown.)
108-88 Egypt. 2. (Cleopatra) BERENICE III, niece,

Perished in sea fight, 88.

And had issue by unknown woman.

PTOLEMY ALEXANDER II, b. *cir.* 106.

PTOLEMY ALEXANDER II, b. *cir.* 106; k. 80 for 19 days. m. (Cleopatra) BERENICE III (cousin), 80.
Murdered 80.

PTOLEMY NEUS DIONYSUS—AULETES; k. 80-58 Egypt. m. CLEOPATRA VI TRYPHAENA (sister).
(58-55 exiled.)
55-51 Egypt.

Had issue :—

By CLEOPATRA VI—TRYPHAENA.

(a) BERENICE IV, m. { 1. Seleucus Cybiosactes.
2. Archelaus.

Murdered by Ptolemy Neus Dionysus 55.

(b) CLEOPATRA VII, b. 69, m. { 1. Ptolemy (brother), 48.

(c) Arsinoë, b. between 68-65. Murdered by Antony, 41.

(d) PTOLEMY, b. *cir.* 61.

(c) PTOLEMY, b. 59.

PTOLEMY, b. *cir.* 61; k. 51-48. m. CLEOPATRA VII (sister).

PTOLEMY b. *cir.* 59; k. 48-44.

CLEOPATRA VII, b. 69; reigned 51-30.

Had issue by Julius Caesar :—

PTOLEMY Caesarion, b. 47. Murdered 30.

By Mark Antony :—

Alexander Helius and Cleopatra Selene, b. 40.

Ptolemy Philadelphus, b. *cir.* 35.

THE PTOLEMIES OF EGYPT

CHAPTER I

PTOLEMY SURNAMED SOTER

<i>Satrap</i>	..	..	..	323-305 B.C.
<i>King</i>	..	..	..	305-285 B.C.
<i>Died</i>	..	..	..	283 B.C.

ALEXANDER THE GREAT, King of Macedonia, had crossed the Hellespont in 334 B.C. and, sweeping through Asia Minor, Syria and Phoenicia, had entered Egypt two years later. He was then at the parting of the ways. His original commission had been accomplished: he was free to return home if he had a mind to do so. He had restored to the Greek cities of Asia Minor their freedom, he had delivered Syria and Egypt from Persian tyranny; he had founded Alexandria, a city that has perpetuated his name for all time, he had acquired from the high priest of Amen-Rē in Memphis a title of divinity, he had persuaded the high priest of Zeus Ammon of Siwa to confirm the title. It was not enough. His imagination envisaged empire over the unknown East, and in the spring of 331 B.C. he turned his back on Egypt, his eyes on India. Eight years later he lay dead of a fever in distant Babylon, and his empire that stretched from the Hellespont to the Indus, from the Oxus to the Nile, disintegrated.

"What is to happen to the world?" asked Demades the orator, when the news of Alexander's death reached Athens, and the dispute that broke out among his lieutenants over the succession lent colour to the lament. Election of a new king lay finally with the Macedonian rank and file, and no aspirant to the throne was likely to quarrel with the tradition. But it had become the custom of the intimates of the dead sovereign to consider the claims of candidates and to recommend to the favour of the army the most suitable, so Perdiccas, grand vizier, assembled the somatophylakes, the seven senior officers of Alexander, to determine the choice. Decision was not easy to come by in a council whose members were jealous and suspicious of one another. It had not been the practice of Alexander to distinguish between his somatophylakes: he admitted no one of them to his confidence, he required neither

advice nor initiative from subordinates. Thus loyalty to the empire, and to the dead man's dream of a brotherhood of man, ceased at the grave and each somatophylax came to the council speculating how he could twist Alexander's death to his own interest. Only Perdiceas and Ptolemy had their plans cut and dried. To be vizier was not enough for Perdiceas; breath had hardly left Alexander's body before the ambitious vizier himself dreamt of the succession. Philip Arrhidaeus, an epileptic half-brother of Alexander, was the obvious heir; but Roxane, the dead king's Persian wife, was with child, and Perdiceas suggested postponement of election till the child was born and its sex known. His design was simple. He would persuade his fellow somatophylakes to elect him viceroy of the empire during the interval; he would use the office to consolidate his own claim to the throne by marriage with a princess of the Macedonian royal family. Cleopatra, sister of Alexander and widow of the King of Epirus, was awaiting a second husband, and Perdiceas fixed upon her as his bride.

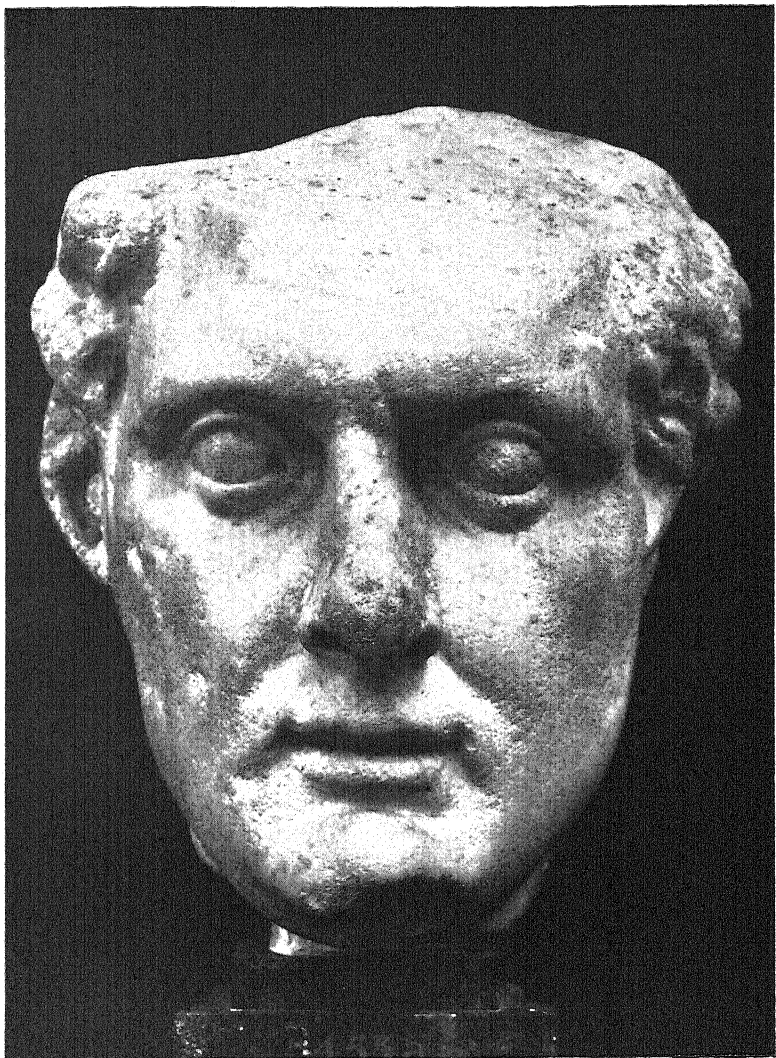
The council were taken aback. Perdiceas was unpopular, and more than one member was ready to pick a quarrel with him. Meleager did so. He leapt to his feet, crying that Macedonian men did not wait upon the convenience of women, that the army would have no other king but Philip Arrhidaeus. Debate became warm: some officers were for postponing, others for taking decision, until Ptolemy, a plain-speaking man whose opinions commanded respect, undertook to mediate. There was no love lost between Perdiceas and himself. The two men had jointly stormed the Rock of Chorieneas, a fortress that had barred Alexander's advance to the Indus, and the first had consistently ignored the part played by Ptolemy. But the latter quarrelled with no man, and having on this occasion his own design to achieve, he intended to remain on terms with the vizier Perdiceas, in possession of Alexander's signet-ring. In his opinion the council would do well to adjourn till Roxane had borne her child. Then the point at issue could be decided thus: if the child was a girl, Philip Arrhidaeus would succeed, if a boy the heritage would be divided. It was a very reasonable compromise: both would be sons of kings, and there was nothing to choose between the two mothers: Philip's was a Thessalian dancing girl, Roxane was a Persian and barbarian. Meanwhile there must be a guardianship of the heir or heirs, and a distribution of the empire among the somatophylakes, who would govern and act together in the name of the king of kings. For

himself, Ptolemy asked no more than Egypt, a remote and unattractive province, preferring that a more deserving Macedonian than he should bear greater responsibilities. It was a suggestion that commended itself to the whole council. Every member had in mind the ambition that inspired Perdiccas: all desired to be within striking distance of Macedonia, or to possess a satrapy sufficiently large to substantiate a future claim to independence. Meleager withdrew his criticism, Perdiccas protested his honesty, and the council elected the latter to the dual office of commander-in-chief and guardian of the heir or heirs to the throne. To mark their appreciation of his services in composing the dispute the council allotted Egypt to Ptolemy: a cheap gift, since no one but the simple Ptolemy coveted a province so distant from the heart of the Empire. There followed the pleasing task of apportioning the empire. It was done in friendly fashion. Antipater took Macedonia, Lysimachus Thrace, Antigonus most of Asia Minor, Meleager Phoenicia, Laomedon Syria, and Seleucus command of Babylon.

Distribution of the more distant provinces of Asia was taking place, when uproar in the Macedonian camp stopped the procedure. News of the decision had leaked out: the cavalry and infantry were making ready to spring at one another's throats. Feeling between the two arms, never very cordial since a recent mutiny of Opis, had come to a head over the succession: the phalanx swore to serve no king with a drop of Persian blood in his veins, the cavalry cried out that Alexander's child must have his chance. Meleager offered to reason with the infantry, and the council bade him go. Its members might have chosen a more loyal agent, for once in the camp, Meleager declared for Philip Arrhidaeus and led out the phalanx to battle. The cavalry took up the challenge, and for a while it seemed as if a clash must come. Then tempers cooled: Perdiccas gave an assurance that the arrangement was only provisional, and cavalry and infantry withdrew to their respective quarters. The crisis had passed, but, marking its moral, the new satraps hastened their preparations for their departure from Babylon. But no one dared actually to march until Roxane had borne her child, or had extracted from the miserly Perdiccas a sum sufficient to take him to his satrapy. The royal treasury was rich enough to support the expenditure. The sixty talents that Alexander's military chest held at the crossing of the Hellespont in the course of the campaign had swollen to near a quarter of a million, and Perdiccas haggled and wrangled with the

satraps as to the sums he would give and they would take. Of the delay Ptolemy took advantage to lay hands upon certain statues of the gods of Egypt that Cambyzes and successive kings of Persia had carried off from Memphis. Perdicas noted the robbery, perceived its implications: but he said nothing, nor did he object when Ptolemy undertook to bury Alexander at Siwa. The choice lay between the shrine of Zeus Ammon in that oasis, and Aegea, the ancient capital of Macedonia and traditional burial place of the royal family. Ptolemy's plea that since Alexander in life habitually spoke of Ammon as his father, in death the son should rest in the father's temple, seemed reasonable to his fellows. Perdicas alone was in two minds about the point. He distrusted Ptolemy, but he feared Antipater, nominated satrap of Macedonia, more, and he thought the first at this moment the lesser peril. In due course, Roxane was delivered of a boy child, who received the name of Alexander, and the way now was clear for Ptolemy to take possession of Egypt.

He was then about forty years of age, a man in the prime of life, virile and confident, toughened by years of war, fortified by a multitude of experiences. A broad forehead denoted intelligence, a pronounced jaw and chin character, a mobile mouth sympathy and understanding. If the coins of the period are testimony, his expression was severe but serene, his profile too angular to be called handsome, but none the less the portrait is that of a man of distinction and even culture. His father was Lagus, an obscure country squire, his mother Arsinoë, a distant connection of the royal house. The marriage had caused surprise, and to explain the *mésalliance* the malicious court hinted that Arsinoë would have made a better match but for a suspicion upon her virtue. Gossip asserted indeed that the girl had been one of King Philip's many mistresses, and that Lagus had obligingly accepted the paternity of his wife's first child. Philip no doubt took an interest in young Ptolemy's career: he placed the boy in the corps of pages, and thought well enough of the new page to make him companion of his son Alexander. The two boys got on well together, and when Alexander, furious at his father's second marriage, fled from the court, the faithful Ptolemy went with him. In the campaigns that followed Alexander's accession, Ptolemy made a reputation for himself. He was present at the destruction of Thebes; he commanded a squadron of cavalry at the Granicus; he led the column that scaled the rock of Chorienes; he was in charge of the rearguard when the army



Attributed to Ptolemy Soter
(Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen)

[Facing page 4

descended the Indus. These exploits brought about his advancement: he became first a member of the royal bodyguard (the somatophylakes) and then master of the horse, the two highest distinctions in Alexander's power to bestow. But intrepidity was not Ptolemy's only virtue: he was also impeccably honest, disdain-ing intrigue and hating deceit. In short, an uncommon Macedonian.

It was a happy accident that sent Ptolemy to Egypt, for her people were nearing the end of their patience. The expectations that Egypt cherished of an era of benevolent and honest government, following the expulsion of the Persian, had vanished, her belief that a golden age was at hand had died. Hardly had Alexander departed than oppression and abuse of authority reappeared. It was largely the fault of Alexander: he had bequeathed to the Egyptian people an administration excellent in theory, deplorable in practice. Control had been divided, justice being left in the care of native notables, defence to two Macedonian commanders, revenue and expenditure to a Greek of Naucratis, a colony established on the Canopic arm of the Nile by Amasis of the Twenty-sixth Dynasty. In that settlement Alexander had found Cleomenes, a banker of repute, who engaged to collect and remit the tribute payable by Egypt punctually and in full. But report had lied: far from being incorruptible, Cleomenes had tricked and robbed Macedonians and Egyptians impartially. His appetite for money was insatiable. He taxed the peasantry unmercifully, he ignored the remonstrances of the notables: he embezzled the pay of the troops, he treated with contempt the protests of their commanders. Growing bolder, he exploited other sources of wealth. Temple treasuries were one, monopolies of all agricultural produce a second. Many willing tongues reported these and other misdeeds as soon as Ptolemy set foot in Egypt, and he resolved to make an end of Cleomenes. He was the more inclined to do so since Perdicas had coolly commissioned the man as Ptolemy's vizier. Thus Cleomenes' execution would fulfil a double purpose. It would signify to the Egyptian people Ptolemy's intention to purge the administration: it would remind Perdicas that the satrap of Egypt was master in his own house.

He cast an eye over the country, and the review left him dissatisfied. Egypt seemed on the verge of ruin. Agriculture was impoverished, commerce declining, craftsmanship perishing: in short, socially and economically the country was disintegrating. The misfortune clearly sprang from exaggerated adherence to tradition. Nothing changed, nothing moved: yet practices and

customs virtuous enough in Pharaonic Egypt were less so now. The distinction between ruler and priest, soldier and peasant, was obsolete, the classification of the people into shepherds, agriculturists and artisans no less foolish. The temple share of the revenue should be smaller, that of the ruler larger. Religion also was debased: cults were local, rarely national. Every nome maintained a priesthood inspired by selfish materialism, and a multitude of temples often consecrated to the worship of gods in the form of animals. To the aggrandizement of temples and their acolytes even the army had been sacrificed. As a machine for fighting it was valueless: its utility in maintaining order was hardly less doubtful. Units were unequipped and untrained, the rank and file employed generally in the cultivation of royal and temple domains.

The ancient ties between the throne and its subjects also had loosened, the divine authority claimed by the first and acknowledged by the second was vanishing. Thus for Ptolemy the outlook was perplexing. He was a satrap, not a king: the son of an honest Macedonian, not the offspring of the Egyptian Zeus Ammon, as Alexander claimed to be, and he dared not pretend to be divine. His tenure of Egypt was insecure: Perdicas was no friend of his, Antipater, Antigonus and others were no more likely to show him mercy if the occasion served. Thus a contented and loyal Egypt was a prime necessity, and Ptolemy considered how he could achieve this end. Alexander's creation of scattered colonies throughout Asia, each an imitation in miniature of the Greek city-state, had not been very successful: such settlements had become in time centres of turbulence and sedition, and Ptolemy preferred a supreme authority powerful enough to impose for the common good its will upon officials, priests, peasants, and foreigners alike. That supremacy Ptolemy reserved for himself. Egypt should be his house and his alone, but on the understanding that as its master he would tolerate no oppression, condone no injustice. On the other hand, in his own interest and in that of Egypt he needed foreign capital and foreign brains: the first to develop the country's resources, the second to sustain the type of administration he contemplated establishing. If he borrowed capital and brains from Greece, he thought that Egypt would not resent their introduction. The Greek for centuries had been a familiar figure in the countryside, beginning usually as a mercenary soldier imported by a Pharaoh to secure himself against invasion or revolt, and ending as a colonist. The Egyptian was hospitable, the

colonist amiable, and Amasis, that far-seeing Pharaoh of the Twenty-sixth Dynasty, thought to take advantage of the times by persuading Greek traders no less than the Greek mercenary to settle in Egypt. He founded Naucratis for the purpose, he provided its citizens with autonomy. Other immigrant Ionians, Cretans and Jews followed, establishing their politeuma or municipalities, and marrying Egyptian women in the hope of softening the pain of exile. But their offspring, without brains or capital, were not the type of men Ptolemy sought, and he looked across to Greece to supply the deficiency.

The most direct route from Babylon to Alexandria went through Memphis, and in Memphis Ptolemy stayed a while to familiarize himself with Egyptian life. His visit coincided with the death of an Apis bull, and Ptolemy, who respected few gods in the form of man and none in that of animals, was genuinely astonished at the interest the event excited. It was clearly sincere: through death the bull became Osiris-Apis and assimilated to Osiris, god of the underworld and judge of men's souls. All Egypt went into mourning while the process of embalming lasted, all Memphis attended the burial of the latest Osiris-Apis in the vaults of the Serapeum. It was an imposing ritual. Led to the edge of the desert by one priest impersonating the god Thoth, scribe of the sacred books, the body was conducted by a second wearing the jackal mask of Anubis. The curious Ptolemy asked for further explanation, and for answer, a priest read aloud the inscription carved by Psammeticus I on the portal of the Serapeum. "A message was brought to His Majesty. The temple of thy father Osiris is in no choice condition. Regard the holy corpses (the Apis): in what pitiable condition they lie." Psammeticus was touched, he deplored the calamity: "a courtier of the King was bidden to impose a general levy for the work of renovation." Psammeticus built a new gallery: Ptolemy's contribution was more modest. He subscribed fifteen silver talents to the cost of the burial; he made to Memphis a gift of the statues of the Egyptian gods that he had carried off from Babylon.

It was a magnanimous present, and Memphis would have had this generous stranger stay awhile. But Ptolemy was impatient: it had been Alexander's intention to transfer the capital from Memphis to Alexandria, and Ptolemy desired to carry out the intention. So, taking ship, he sailed down to the sea. He was agreeably surprised to discover the progress that had been made. On the strip of beach that separated Lake Mareotis from the sea

an imposing city was rising. Its surroundings were attractive: the azure sea on the north and the saffron desert on the south created a noble setting. There had been no niggardliness of space or material in Alexander's design. Cleomenes had furnished sufficient money and labour, and Dinocrates of Chalcedon and his assistant Sostratus of Cnidus, the architect, had made good use of their opportunities. The heptastadium or mole uniting the island of Pharos with the mainland was approaching completion, and anchorage on either side of it was now safe for the largest ships of burden. Two spacious roads north to south and east to west, closed by handsome gates and bordered with shady colonnades, cut Alexandria into quarters, while intersecting these thoroughfares there ran boulevards at regular intervals. Alexander had had in mind a cosmopolitan city peopled by Macedonians, Greeks, Jews, and Egyptians, and Dinocrates had allotted special areas to the two last. Macedonians and Greeks might live where they would, but the Jew must keep to his own quarter in the centre of the town, and the Egyptian to his on the shores of Lake Mareotis. For the royal palace the architect had reserved the promontory of Lochias. Scattered over the town were sites allocated to the future hippodrome, acropolis, theatre, and gymnasium, while at the point of intersection of the two main thoroughfares, the Meson Pedion, or Canopic road, and the Argeus, was a space marked off for the Sema or tomb of the great Alexander. Dinocrates' culminating achievement, a tribute to his resource and skill, was the construction of a canal to provide the new Alexandria with potable water. Hitherto the Egyptian village of Rhacotis, bordering Mareotis, had drunk from that lake: an inconstant provision, since supply depended upon infiltration from the Nile, and infiltration upon the season of the year. Moreover, the water was distasteful, sometimes brackish, always insipid, and seeking a more certain and purer source, Dinocrates went to the Nile itself. Taking off at Schedia, his canal skirted the southern limit of Alexandria, distributed its water throughout the city, and finally emptied itself into the western harbour or Port Eunustus. It was a noble canal, sufficiently wide and deep to permit the passage of boats to and from Schedia and sufficiently rapid in current to prevent stagnation of the stream. But that end did not satisfy this master architect: it was in his mind also to create a city of pleasure no less than of business. It was not enough for Dinocrates to allot sites for public offices, gardens, hippodromes, gymnasiums, and so on: he meant too to provide access to traditional points of interest outside the

boundaries of the town. A dozen miles east of the city at the mouth of the Nile was the little haven of Canopus, sacred in the eye of Egyptians to Isis, consecrated in the mind of Greeks to its connection with Menelaus. There Menelaus, homeward bound from Troy, had touched to refit and rest, there his pilot Canopus had died of a snake-bite. To honour the dead man Menelaus had renamed the beach Canopus, and every pious Greek in Egypt had cherished the tradition. Such was the legend, and, mindful of it, Dinocrates continued his canal eastward until it disappeared in the sea at Canopus. Thus did he honour the memory of Menelaus, King of Lacedaemonia, husband of Helen.

Watching and encouraging Dinocrates' labour, Ptolemy found leisure to consider the limits of his satrapy. They seemed absurdly narrow. The Libyan and Sinai deserts were poor protection against invasion and new markets were also an imperative necessity if Alexandria was to prosper. Moreover, certain commodities of which Egypt stood in continual need, metal and timber suitable for shipbuilding in particular, were unobtainable locally. There was only one solution of the problem, the extension of Egyptian sovereignty, and Ptolemy let his thoughts wander to Cyrenaica, Coelesyria,¹ and Cyprus. In existing conditions, Egypt was a kingdom of length without breadth. The Pharaohs of the Twelfth Dynasty had penetrated the Sudan and occupied Dongola: their successors, less adventurous monarchs, had made the first cataract their frontier. It was a reasonable decision. The Sudan was a barren and inhospitable desert, and of desert Egypt had already enough and to spare. But east and west it was another matter, and Cyrenaica and Coelesyria seemed almost to invite occupation. The first, a wealthy trading confederation of five Greek cities, might well be forced to accept Egypt's surplus production, the second to furnish from its forests the timber needed by Egypt. Cyrene, the capital of the Pentapolis, in particular would be an easy prey: a city-state perpetually torn and distracted by domestic discord. The occupation of Coelesyria and Phoenicia was more difficult: the population was more intractable, and Laomedon, the governor, unlikely to relinquish the territory without a fight. A descent upon Cyprus was also impracticable, until Egypt had a fleet strong enough to command the Aegean Sea.

For the moment indeed Ptolemy even judged it prudent to

¹ The fertile valley lying between the two ranges of Mount Libanus, bordering Phoenicia on the west and Palestine on the south.

postpone attack upon Cyrenaica: he was, in fact, in no condition to take the field. His forces consisted only of a thousand or two Macedonian infantry and a handful of cavalry, veterans who in Babylon had thrown in their lot with him, supported by indifferent troops, the relics of an army of occupation left by Alexander to protect and police Egypt. Recruited haphazardly in the course of the campaign, that army was Greek in name and spirit but Greek in nothing else. Half the force had idled away the years in frontier fortresses, the remainder had sat in Memphis under the orders of Cleomenes. It was poor preparation for war, and Ptolemy considered how he could repair the misfortune. His eye wandered to Greece. There had never been any lack in that country of able-bodied men ready to sell themselves as mercenaries, and Ptolemy let it be known that he was prepared to pay a good price for the volunteers. Not that there was need to be extravagant in the matter of pay at this moment, for the market was full of unemployed professional mercenaries. Supply was exceeding demand: Alexander and Darius were dead, and men-at-arms sought in vain for new employers. Simultaneously the mercenary was in a fair way to be elbowed out of the market by the untrained but cheaper recruit. Economic pressure was forcing the peasant off the land and, confronted by the impossibility of producing grain cheaply enough to undersell the foreign importer, he was ready to accept any employment that promised a bare living. As much might be said of the Greek banker and merchant looking for fresh fields to exploit. Incessant quarrels between oligarchies and proletariats, the incurable jealousy of city-states of their neighbours, were ruining business, and both capitalist and trader were looking out for safer and more remunerative investment. A new Egypt seemed to afford hope of the future, and Ptolemy let it be known that he would welcome not only mercenaries but also men of business.

The professional mercenary made his presence felt so speedily in the ranks of the Egyptian army that Ptolemy in the autumn of 322 B.C. reconsidered his decision about Cyrenaica. Accident hastened the decision: Cyrene, the capital, was in the hands of the proletariat, and its victims were flying for refuge to Alexandria. Cyrene's history had been one of vicissitude. Founded in the seventh century before Christ, it had been in turn a sovereign kingdom, a republic, and a city-state. Each change had been for the worse, each had been followed by proscription and reprisal. Finally the proletariat obtained the whip-hand, and in despair the

oligarchy leaders besought Ptolemy to come to their assistance. He seized the opportunity, marched across the Libyan desert, slew Thibron, the mainstay of the proletariat, and treated Cyrene as a prize of war. But he was lenient enough, amnestying the insurgents, restoring the constitution, and reserving for himself only the right to appoint a military governor, instal a garrison in the citadel, and nominate his own council of leaders. Well pleased with the success, Ptolemy went back to Egypt.

News of the adventure presently reached Perdikkas, then in Asia Minor. It had been too brilliant and too decisive to suit that jealous vizier: moreover, Ptolemy had not asked his authority to undertake the campaign and Perdikkas resolved to make the offender smart for the omission. Ptolemy's punishment must come later, since at that moment the vizier could think of nothing but the succession. It must be his, and he had left Babylon partly to negotiate marriage with Cleopatra, sister of Alexander the Great. The suit prospered. Cleopatra was willing. Olympias, her mother, encouraged the match, and the prospective partners met in Sardis. It was a desirable marriage in the eyes of all three. Olympias needed Perdikkas to crush her hated enemy Antipater, satrap of Macedonia, Perdikkas required Cleopatra's influence in the army, and Cleopatra pined for a husband and a kingdom. But the match fell through: Antipater divined Olympias' intention, and counter-struck by offering Perdikkas the hand of his daughter Nicæa. It was an embarrassing choice for Perdikkas. If he accepted Nicæa, he sacrificed his strongest claim to the throne; if he took Cleopatra, he would make a mortal enemy of Antipater. Interest pointed one way, prudence another, and Perdikkas temporized. He married Nicæa, but let Cleopatra understand that on Antipater's death he would divorce his wife. That was not enough for the proud Cleopatra. Humiliated by Perdikkas' decision, she declared her intention to return home. She spoke too quickly: all roads to Macedonia and Epirus were barred, and Cleopatra, in place of being a bride, had become a prisoner. Perdikkas was no man to stand on scruple: if he himself could not marry Alexander's sister, he was determined that at least no other Macedonian should.

Marriage with Nicæa did not better his chances. Olympias abandoned him as too chicken-hearted for her purposes, the crafty Antipater doubted his honesty. Others shared the same uncertainty: east and west of the Euphrates satraps and commanders were questioning Perdikkas' loyalty to the heirs of Alexander.

Antigonus in Phrygia was the first to show his hand. Perdikkas as vizier ordered Antigonus to assist Eumenes, satrap of Cappadocia, and Antigonus point-blank refused. Summoned to Sardis to answer for his contumacy, the culprit slipped across the Hellespont and urged Antipater to join him in crushing the enemy before the latter crushed them. Others came forward in support, Ptolemy among them. Meanwhile, alive to the peril, Perdikkas was maturing his plans. His strategy was sound enough in principle: the destruction of one member of the coalition would frighten the others into disbanding, and he selected Ptolemy as the victim. While Eumenes barred the Hellespont and Clitus, his admiral, patrolled the coast-line, he himself would advance on Egypt. He opened the campaign by secretly instructing the commander of the funeral cortège of Alexander, then on the point of leaving Babylon, to conduct his charge to Macedonia in place of Egypt as the satraps in council of war in Babylon had decided. That officer dared not disobey the order; but he contrived to let Ptolemy know of it, and Ptolemy met the convoy outside Damascus. The business was soon settled. Ptolemy's arguments were convincing: Perdikkas was not entitled to disturb the decision taken in Babylon, and the body of Alexander must rest at Siwa.

Thus the cortège came to Memphis and its arrival created a profound impression. Never had any Egyptian believed that man could design a catafalque so magnificent: upon a gigantic car crowned with an imposing canopy, drawn by four yokes of mules, sixteen to a yoke, each animal garlanded with necklaces of precious stones, there rested the coffin of hammered gold, hardly visible for its covering of purple cloth. Upon the cloth were laid the sword and pike carried by Alexander in battle, and from the corners depended a multitude of golden bells that tinkled sweetly as the car jolted on its journey. To heighten the illusion and remind the spectator of the dead king's triumphs at the Granicus, Issus, and Gaugemala, representations of these victories dangled from the sides of the car. Behind the coffin stood a lofty throne of gold, and from its steps there hung pictures of Alexander's prowess in other fields.¹ As the procession filed through the gates of Memphis, it evoked memories of Alexander's engaging manners and hospitality, of his respect for the gods of Egypt, and of his sympathy with Egyptian tradition. The story of the interception of the convoy at Damascus had escaped, and the spectators applauded the action. Was not Egypt a more appropriate resting place for

¹ Diodorus Siculus, bk. xvii., ch. 3.

the body than Macedonia: had not the dead hero himself wished to lie in his father's shrine in Egypt? Honour then to the faithful lieutenant who executed the wish, and curses on the disloyal vizier who would have left it unfulfilled. Thus murmured the citizens of Memphis, and they fell to considering the respective merits of Siwa and their own city. Reflection awoke. Siwa was distant, a pilgrimage to its shrine would be a long and arduous journey: Ptah, in the eyes of Memphis, was a mightier god than Ammon, and hope rose that Ptolemy would let the body lie for ever in Memphis. Only the high priest of Ptah was doubtful, jealous of the supremacy of his own god. "Do not bury Alexander here," he cried, "but rather in the city he founded at Rhacotis: wherever his body lies, there will be strife and discord." Ptolemy listened: it was a counsel that coincided with his own views.

For the moment he took no decision. Perdiccas, moving south, had passed through Gaza, was entering Sinai, and Ptolemy prepared to meet the enemy at Pelusium. He reinforced its garrison, raised a line of redoubts, strengthened the famous "Wall of the Camel," and waited patiently for Perdiccas to attack. Investing Pelusium, the latter summoned Ptolemy to surrender and stand his trial for treason. There was no answer to be had: covered by the Nile, Ptolemy treated the message with contempt, and Perdiccas perceived that he was wasting time. The military situation was also unpromising. Perdiccas could make no impression upon the defenders of Pelusium and, short of supplies, he secretly struck camp and marched up the Nile in the expectation of deceiving his enemy. But Ptolemy was too acute: he withdrew also and Perdiccas, arriving opposite Memphis, discovered that Ptolemy had beaten him in the race. Thus to capture Memphis Perdiccas had first to ford the Nile, and then carry the defences manned by Macedonian veterans supported by a hostile population. The odds were too heavy. The river was deep, the current swift, the bottom pocketed with holes so deep that even the elephants lost their footing. There was a check, and Perdiccas, losing resolution, ordered a retreat. The battle was lost, and, furious at the poltroonery of their leader, two lieutenants forced their way into his tent and strangled him as he stood up to greet them. The next day Ptolemy fed the survivors of the battle, praised their courage, and in return Perdiccas' army elected him as guardian of the boy king. But Ptolemy did not covet the honour: the talisman, Alexander's body, for which he had fought, was in his hands, and for the moment he wanted nothing more.

Meanwhile Antipater had hurried to Ephesus to cut Perdiccas' line of communication, and Antigonus had taken the field against Eumenes. Then news of Perdiccas' death stopped the fighting, and the allies marched to Triparadiso on the Orontes to meet the survivors of Perdiccas' army with the two boy kings in their charge. There in the autumn of 321 B.C. a redistribution of the offices took place: Antipater was elected regent and guardian to the boy kings, Antigonus commander-in-chief of the army, Seleucus and Ptolemy were confirmed in their respective commands. There was no question now of dislodging the last master of Egypt, the Red Sea, Libya, and Cyrenaica, he needed only to subjugate Phoenicia and Coelesyria to rule a dominion as large as that of the regent himself. He had stayed away from Triparadiso. He did not mean to defend his attitude towards Cyrenaica or disclose his intentions towards Coelesyria: if any Macedonian questioned Ptolemy's right to either, let him reflect first over the fate of Perdiccas. In the guardianship of Alexander's heirs or in the succession he felt no interest: had he wished to found a dynasty, he would have taken a shorter cut by marrying a descendant of the Pharaohs. But Antipater needed Ptolemy, and to win Ptolemy's support he offered him the hand of his daughter Eurydice. It was no doubt a great match and a great compliment, yet Ptolemy hesitated. He was living comfortably with the still attractive Thais, the Corinthian lady who had followed him across the Hellespont twelve years earlier: he had a family by her that he was in no mind to disinherit. On the other hand, he could not afford to make an enemy of Antipater, friend of the powerful Antigonus, and so with a heavy heart, packing back to Greece his mistress, he married Eurydice. Well satisfied, Antipater left Triparadiso with the two young kings, and thus Macedonia again became the centre of the empire.

Triparadiso had been a disappointment to Ptolemy. He had borne the brunt of Perdiccas' ambition, but his reward had been no more than a title to Cyrenaica he did not need and a wife he did not want, and moodily he turned his eye upon Coelesyria and Cyprus. Either gave the impression of being now an easier prey: he was stronger now on land and sea, and no one of his neighbours was likely to interfere. Antipater was busy in Greece, Antigonus in hunting down Eumenes, Seleucus in administering his vast satrapy east of the River Euphrates. So Ptolemy opened a correspondence with Laomedon, governing Coelesyria on behalf of the boy king, and offered him a bribe to abandon the charge. But

Laomedon was incorruptible, and Ptolemy, exasperated by his qualms of conscience, dispatched one corps of mercenaries to occupy Coelesyria and a second to clear Phoenicia. It was a bloodless campaign: Laomedon promptly fled, and Ptolemy was free to consider his second objective. Cyprus, rich in metal, richer still in the number of harbours that its indented coastline provided, was worth fighting for. To dominate the Aegean had been the dream of every Egyptian, Assyrian, Phoenician and Persian monarch: for supremacy over territory bordering the eastern Mediterranean depended, as it does to-day, upon command at sea. Thus Alexander in his passage through Phoenicia had stopped to expel the Persian from Cyprus. To him the island was "the key of Egypt," but to Ptolemy Cyprus was also "the key of Syria." But the hour was not ripe. Relieved by Alexander from Persian domination, Cyprus had split into principalities, and its nine princes had professed undying loyalty to the Macedonian cause. Mindful of the obligation, they had declared against Perdiccas and refused his fleet supplies. For reward they had been invited to Triparadiso, and Antipater there had solemnly guaranteed their independence. That assurance Ptolemy did not dare break for the moment.

He was over-cautious. Stricken in years, Antipater had died, the empire was again in confusion, and Triparadiso forgotten. Demades' words had come true. "Macedonia," he had said, "was like a blinded Cyclops in his cave." There Cassander, Antipater's son, was contending with Polyperchon, his father's trusted counsellor; in Asia, Antigonus was still absorbed in the pursuit of Eumenes; while in Thrace, Lysimachus was raiding the southern shores of the Black Sea. In Europe the advantage seemed to lie with Polyperchon: the army stood by him, Greece declared for him, and to add to the confusion Olympias, driven by Antipater to shelter in Epirus, was hurrying back to Macedonia to take charge of her grandson Alexander, the child of Roxane. Cassander counter-struck by appealing in the name of the two young kings to Antigonus and to Ptolemy. It was a coalition more formidable in name than in fact: Antigonus was only half-hearted, and Ptolemy had no sooner given his answer than he repented the impulse. He calculated Cassander's chances and found them doubtful, he considered Antigonus' motives and suspected their virtue. His judgment, not always infallible, was pretty shrewd in this instance. Polyperchon had proclaimed Antigonus a traitor to the empire, and, taking a hand in the business, Olympias appointed

Eumenes commander-in-chief in his place. Moreover, it was currently reported that Antigonus claimed now to be sovereign of Asia, that Seleucus had thrown in his lot with Polyperchon. The situation was too complicated for the sober Ptolemy. He scented a trap, he made up his mind to take no further part in the quarrel between Cassander and Polyperchon. So he countermanded the sailing of a fleet commissioned to threaten Polyperchon's hold over Greece, and made ready to withdraw from Coelesyria, the better to protect his own satrapy. The decision was taken too late. An urgent cry from Cassander stopped the evacuation: Eumenes' agents were inciting the Macedonian argyraspidēs or silver shield troops to pass over to Polyperchon, and urging the imperial treasurer in Kyinda to unlock his money-chests in the common cause. Ptolemy could not well close his ears to the appeal and, taking ship, he sailed to Cilicia to prevent the robbery. But Eumenes' officers had already accomplished their task: neither the argyraspidēs nor the treasurer questioned the right of Eumenes, commander in chief by virtue of a decree of Olympias, mother of Alexander the Great, to issue orders, and Ptolemy had his pains for nothing. Then the war in Europe took another and unsuspected turn. Cassander drove Polyperchon out of Greece, captured Athens, and installed as his representative the orator Demetrius of Phalerum. The news that Eumenes was advancing upon Cilicia added to Ptolemy's perplexities. In no mind to be caught at Kyinda like a rat in a trap, he re-embarked, evacuated Coelesyria and returned to Alexandria.

Eumenes marched to Babylon and, disappointed of Seleucus' support, passed into Media. It was the end of this adventurous Greek. Hard upon his track came the implacable Antigonus, who caught him and slew him. Once more Seleucus stood firm: he had refused his help to Eumenes, he denied it now to Antigonus. Flushed with success, Antigonus made no secret of his pretensions to the overlordship of Alexander's empire: he talked of Egypt as a legitimate annexe, of Ptolemy as a satrap who must be removed. Seleucus understood the implication—his own turn would come next—and secretly bade Ptolemy be on his guard. Ptolemy took the warning composedly: like Seleucus, he was now determined to keep clear as long as it was possible from entanglement in dispute between his fellow satraps. He was more than ever convinced of the wisdom of this decision when his agents in Macedonia reported that Olympias had murdered Philip Arrhidaeus to clear the succession for her own grandson Alexander; that

Cassander, hurrying out of Greece, had slain in turn Olympias, and was keeping the surviving heir Alexander with his mother Roxane close prisoners.

Of the respite from war Ptolemy took advantage to reorganize his satrapy. He began with the administration, and endeavoured to repair its disorder. He was not an iconoclast: he had no desire to hellenize Egypt, no ambition to destroy Egyptian tradition. He was a plain man, indisposed to meddle further than he thought necessary for his own purpose. Thus he disturbed as little as possible existing procedure. Administration in the provinces remained in Egyptian hands. The nome, or province, and the toparchy, or district, continued to be the units of government, the privileges of the priesthood were undisturbed, taxation was collected by local officials. But if on the surface the system seemed unchanged, in practice a complete transformation was taking place. Into the government a new and subtle influence was being introduced. The Egyptian nomarch and his subordinate the toparch were no longer supreme: by the side of the first there sat presently a Greek responsible for order in the nome, at the elbow of the second another responsible for collection of revenue, and both corresponded directly with Alexandria on business concerning the performance of their duty. The state in short was in process of becoming a highly organized and administered institution in which no person outside the government played a part. War, finance and foreign policy Ptolemy controlled himself, leaving to Greeks supervision of the administration. Alexandria, the new capital, demanded different treatment. It was a city that its founder intended should be inspired with Hellenic traditions, and its administration rested thus, at least in theory, upon the broad base of public opinion. Every Macedonian and Greek by virtue of nationality was a citizen with a citizen's right to carry arms, and free to meet and discuss in open assembly his grievances. But beyond these concessions Ptolemy was not prepared to go: the citizen, in short, might carry but not use his arms, the assembly might debate, but not insist upon the repair of political grievances. It was Ptolemy's intention to rule and not to be ruled, and, alive to the difficulties of governing a free city-state, he did not mean to experiment with them in Alexandria. He planted a colony of Macedonian veterans in the Thebaid, renamed the locality Ptolemais, and left the settlers to make their own laws; but military reasons mainly dictated that concession, and between Ptolemais and Alexandria there was no analogy. Thus Alexandria

enjoyed no senate, and no municipal institutions beyond the division of citizens into phyles and demes. There was no protest or complaint against this autocracy of the throne: satisfied with a sense of superiority over the Egyptian, the Greek community of Alexandria submissively left government to the ruler. In short, Alexander's noble conception of a union of races enjoying common rights was never pursued either in the provinces or in the capital. It required perhaps for accomplishment greater imagination and wider vision than any Ptolemy possessed: yet the task should not have been insuperable. Had the first Ptolemy, departing from Greek tradition, acknowledged the right of children of mixed marriages to Greek citizenship, the ideal might have been achieved, and the history of this period been differently written. But the opportunity was missed, and no succeeding Ptolemy enjoyed the courage to make the trial.

CHAPTER II

PTOLEMY SOTER

(continued)

ADMINISTRATION is a drab business at the best, and presently Ptolemy looked about for a distraction. He found it, as other men of his type before and after have discovered it, in love. He was no doubt an amorous man: he had already indulged in two matrimonial experiences, and he was meditating now a third. Obeying Alexander, he had married in Susa Artacama, daughter of the Persian noble Artabanus; deferring to Antipater, he married his daughter Eurydice; he proposed on this occasion to please himself, and his fancy fell upon Berenice, the friend and confidant of his wife.¹ It was hard upon Eurydice. She had done nothing to deserve repudiation: she had made Ptolemy an excellent wife, had borne him a son Ptolemy, surnamed Ceraunus, and two daughters. She could have forgiven a new dynastic marriage: she could not pardon an intrigue with her own lady-in-waiting. But misfortunes happen in an imperfect world, and Eurydice, divining she had lost her husband, left Egypt. There was indeed no more to do, for Ptolemy was no man to cross lightly. What he wanted he took, and in this instance he did well for himself. "Never any woman brought such delight as came from the love borne to his wife by Ptolemy" wrote Theocritus, and Berenice certainly held the affection of the fickle Ptolemy until the day of her death. She was no doubt an attractive woman. Her deep-seated eyes, short, straight nose and arched mouth invited admiration; her wide forehead and rounded chin suggest intelligence and character. Widow of an obscure Macedonian noble, she had followed Eurydice to Egypt, and found its ruler to her liking. It was not surprising: Ptolemy had that dash of the adventurer in his nature that appeals to women, and Berenice seems to have loved him profoundly. It was also a fortunate marriage for the dynasty, in that it secured the

¹ The date of the marriage is uncertain: historians of the period differ. Beloch (*Griechische Geschichte*) and Tarn (*Hellenistic Civilization*) suggest that Berenice began by being the mistress of Ptolemy in 316—315 B.C., and that the marriage did not take place until much later.

succession. Four children were born to Berenice: two sons, Ptolemy later known as Philadelphus and a younger brother Argæus, and two daughters, the elder being Arsinoë, first the wife of Lysimachus of Thrace and then of her brother Philadelphus, and Philotera, the baby of the family.

But no Macedonian could live eternally on love, and presently Ptolemy fell to considering how he could develop Egyptian markets overseas. So far Alexandria had not fulfilled his expectations. The anchorage was safe, the town salubrious: yet Tyre and Rhodes continued to monopolize trade in the Aegean, and the Aegean world to transact business elsewhere than in Egypt. It was disappointing, and seeking an explanation, Ptolemy found it in the fact that Alexandria possessed no currency. The Pharaonic practice of paying in kind or of accepting metal only after interminable discussion of purity and weight still prevailed, and the enterprising trader fought shy of a country that clung to this primitive practice. If the Greek islands and the Greek city-states could coin their own money, Alexandria might well follow the example. There was indeed no substantial reason why it should not do so, provided that sufficient gold and silver was at the disposal of the state, and that a national bank controlled the currency. Unhappily neither condition existed in Egypt. A mass of gold and silver lay idle in the temple vaults, a multitude of foreign coins circulated in the principal markets; but the conservative priest and the ignorant trader were reluctant alike to surrender their hoards for a promise that they would receive later the equivalent in the form of money. More difficult still was the task of creating a state bank. Banking, successfully practised in Greece, was unknown in Egypt, and without banks a national currency was unlikely to flourish. Nor did it do so in this instance. In the beginning Ptolemy began minting a few pieces bearing the joint names of the two young kings, and then dropped the experiment. Later coins struck during the satrapship bear on the obverse the head of Alexander with an elephant or lion's skin, and on the reverse a representation of Zeus or Athene confronting an eagle or a ship: assuming the dignity of king, he replaced the old with a new issue that bore on the obverse his own head bound with the diadem and the aegis knotted round the neck, while below the words *Ptolemaïou Basileos* was an eagle perched on a thunderbolt, the family emblem. He minted money indiscriminately in Egypt, Cyprus, Asia Minor, Phoenicia, and Cyrenaica; he varied his standard from Attic to Rhodian, from Rhodian to Phoenician; he experimented

with five distinct types of gold and silver coinage. This currency was accepted throughout the Aegean: its weight was faithful to standard, its purity unquestioned.¹

Over many other problems Ptolemy also brooded: the deification of Alexander was one, the creation of a new religion or cult that Greek and Egyptian alike would practise, a second. The first was the easier to accomplish. No lieutenant respected more profoundly the memory of Alexander or deplored his death more sincerely, and Ptolemy resolved to establish a cult that would perpetuate the name of Alexander in the city of his own creation for all time. It was perhaps the memorial that the dead hero would himself have chosen, a symbol of the divinity that Egypt had bestowed upon him. So the loyal Ptolemy began in Alexandria the construction of a sanctuary or Sema to receive the body, desired all Macedonians and Greeks to acknowledge Alexander as the son of Zeus, and proclaimed the 25th day of Tybi, the anniversary of the foundation of Alexandria, to be kept as a public holiday in which even the beasts of burden shared.² The cult claimed from its devotees a dual acknowledgement: first of the man who after death had joined his heavenly father, and next of one who in life merited the title of hero. To mark better the second claim, adjoining this sanctuary was a tiny chapel consecrated to the two snakes, the Agathodaemon and its consort the Agathotuche. In one form or another both in Greece and in Egypt the snake, as the protective genius of the home, was held in high esteem, and if it had been a happy thought of Alexander to name the Agathodaemon as the tutelary deity of his new city, it was no less so of Ptolemy to associate Alexander's memory with the snake. But the building of the Sema awoke fresh protest from Memphis and the high priest of Ptah recanted the earlier cry: "Wherever the body lies, there will be strife and discord." The reputation of Memphis as the holiest city of Egypt was at stake, and the high priest now urged Ptolemy to bury Alexander within its walls. The whisper reached Ptolemy in Alexandria, and he hesitated once more. He could afford to disregard objection from the Egyptian laity, he was more reluctant to offend the scruples of the priesthood, the only organized and influential body of opinion in all Egypt. Over each temple there was a controller, the epistates, assisted by an understudy spoken of as "the prophet" in charge of

¹ The history of Ptolemaic coinage is instructive but intricate: Svoronos and Milne are leading authorities.

² Lumbroso, G., *Egitto*, p. 140.

the temple oracle. Next in rank came the custodians of the vestments and statues and sanctuaries of the deities, the examiners and conductors of sacrifices, the casters of horoscopes, and the musicians and choristers, while among the lower orders of the hierarchy were the bearers of the divine barque, the watchers of the habitations of the dead, and the embalmers. The prerogative and authority of the priesthood were extensive: approximately one-third of the cultivable land belonged to one temple or another, and in the countryside the decrees of the temple passed as law. With this formidable corporation Ptolemy was in no mind to quarrel. He delayed construction of the Sema, he endeavoured to mollify the wounded vanity of the priesthood by paying honour to ancient shrines. He had already restored to their lawful owners "the sculptures of the gods found in Asia and all the furniture and books of the temples of Northern and Southern Egypt"; he projected now the embellishment of Thebes at the cost of his private purse. In Karnak he paid homage to Philip Arrhidaeus by erecting a sanctuary and representing in relief Arrhidaeus' consecration by the god Thoth; he honoured Alexander, son of Roxane, by placing in the great hall of the sacred temple a statue of the youth; he carved also over the doorway of the sanctuary of Mut a relief that pictured Ptolemy shaking a sistrum before the goddess, while his consort strummed a harp and her daughters struck the tambourine to drive away the evil spirits. All in short that would gratify the priesthood of Egypt, Ptolemy did. In the company of his wife and children, he went through the Sed festival, performed the coronation rites, received in reward a promise of youth and "years in millions," posed perhaps as the personification of Horus or of Osiris,¹ and restored in 311—310 B.C., in the name of Roxane's son, to the priests of the city of Pe-Tep the Delta revenues that Xerxes I had impiously appropriated. It was the culminating acknowledgment of his respect for Egyptian religion: "to the temples of Horus and Buto, god and goddess of Pe-Tep, passed all villages and cities within the jurisdiction of Pe-Tep, their inhabitants, meadows, waters, birds, herds, and all things produced therein." It was also a convenient opportunity for Ptolemy to remind the Egyptian priesthood of his own virtue, and he was not backward in doing so. He spoke of himself as "the great viceroy of Egypt" and as "a person of youthful energy, prudent of mind, of firm courage, steady foot": he assured Pe-Tep also "that none was like him in the

¹ A. Moret, *Le Nil et la civilisation égyptienne*. Paris, 1926.

stranger's world."¹ For once in a way Ptolemy was overcome with an undue sense of his omnipotence.

The spectacle of a country dominated by a priesthood remarkable neither for morality nor charity was degrading. Ptolemy was no enemy of religion generally: on the contrary, he profoundly believed that no state would prosper without it. But to that conviction he added one or two corollaries: the religion should be common to all inhabitants, and its control should lie with the state. There was nothing in either antagonistic to Egyptian dogma. Religion no doubt was the basis of society in Egypt as elsewhere in the world, and Osiris was worthy of being a national god. But superstition and credulity had destroyed the virtue of the doctrine, and from the worship of Osiris, judge of the dead and inspiration of the resurrection, Egypt had reverted to the adoration of local deities in animal form. If the Greek practice of crediting gods with human passions was foolish, to the philosophic mind the Egyptian habit of crediting animals with divine attributes was still more absurd. Between the tyranny of the temple and the impotence of the state, Egyptian religion in Ptolemy's judgement was degenerating fast.

But reflection kept Ptolemy from meddling at once in the matter. It would have been highly impolitic to do so, for east and west fresh trouble was brewing. Greece was simmering with revolt, Antigonos awaiting an opportunity to pounce on Egypt, and Ptolemy could not afford to excite unrest in his own satrapy. The Persian had despised the risk and paid for the temerity; more prudently, Ptolemy put aside the temptation. In place, he searched for a common platform whereon all inhabitants of Egypt, irrespective of nationality and national traditions, could meet on terms of equality; to provide it he invented a cult that combined Greek and Egyptian doctrinal ideals. Some such platform was clearly necessary in Alexandria, where a heterogeneous population was already quarrelling over doctrine. The Greek was suspicious of the Jew, the Egyptian distrustful of both. With the Jew nothing could be done: his faith was fixed, he knew no god but his own. But the Greek and the Egyptian were less inhospitable, and Ptolemy, marking the fact, thought to combine the attributes of Zeus and Hades, Rē and Osiris, gods of both worlds, in a single divinity, to whom both races could kneel. So came about the creation of Serapis, a cult that lasted far into the Christian era, and

¹ *Stele Alexander Aegus*, Exhibit No. 22182, Cairo Museum. *Records of the Past*, vol. x., p. 70. London, 1878.

influenced the whole world. The Greek was the first to accept the new deity. Acknowledging all gods, yet doubtful of their virtue, he was ready to admit into his pantheon any divinity that promised novelty. Moreover, Serapis purported to be a reincarnation of Osiris, and for Osiris the Greek had a tender regard. Having already equated this Egyptian god with his own Dionysus, he felt no scruple in going a step farther and associating Osiris with Hades. Syncretism among Greeks had become a fashionable pastime, and in Egypt the Alexandrian community found a virgin field for their ingenuity. Thus they learnt to speak of Amen-Rē as Zeus, of Hathor as Aphrodite, of Neith as Athene: they confounded Thabu (the modern Luxor) with their own Thebes, Abuthis, the burial ground of the earliest Pharaohs, with their own Abydos, and Kneph with Canopus, the pilot of Menelaus. Syncretism, on the other hand, meant nothing to the Egyptian; but since Osiris happened to be the tutelary or patron god of Rhacotis, the Egyptian quarter of the city, and Serapis professed to be an emanation of Osiris, he accepted the new cult. It was less easy to convince the people of the country. More simple folk, they continued to worship their familiar god-beasts, and only among the foreign community of Memphis had Serapis adherents.

Of the identity of Serapis with an existing divinity, or of the god's origin and name, nothing is known with certainty. History on the point is obscure and tradition doubtful: the first is too romantic to be true, the second too vague to be convincing. Tacitus and Plutarch, the two classical authorities, begin their relations with a dream. To Ptolemy asleep there appeared a phantom visitor that counselled him to fetch from Pontus the image of the apparition and remove it to Alexandria. Thus commanding, the vision vanished in a blaze of fire. Ptolemy assembled the leading Egyptian priests, and bade them interpret the message. That the visitor meant well by Ptolemy was obvious: beyond that the company did not dare go, since no one had heard of Pontus or knew what god the people of Pontus worshipped. But Timotheus, an Athenian versed in mysteries, happened to be in Alexandria, and to him Ptolemy turned. Timotheus was better informed: travellers in search of adventure had constantly spoken to him of Sinope, a wealthy city on the shores of the Black Sea, and had even reported the existence of a temple sacred to the image of Hades, god of the underworld, and to his consort Proserpine. That was enough for Ptolemy: to Sinope he despatched Timotheus laden with presents for its king, and charged to bring to Alexandria the image at all

costs. But the weather was unpropitious, and to escape shipwreck the company put into Delos. At Delos was a funeral shrine of Apollo, and, seizing the occasion, the embassy consulted the oracle. The god was encouraging: Timotheus was bidden to continue his voyage, lay hands upon the image of Hades, and leave that of Proserpine to the people of Sinope. It seemed unreasonable that Sinope should possess two divine talismans while Alexandria, a city founded by the mighty Alexander, had none, and taking comfort in the thought, Timotheus continued his journey. He was distressed on arriving at Sinope to discover that the city did not share that belief, that the king, though ready enough to accept Ptolemy's presents, made no sign of surrendering the image. Thus three years passed in fruitless negotiation until Ptolemy, becoming impatient, dispatched a second embassy and more valuable presents. The king graciously welcomed the newcomers and accepted Ptolemy's fresh gifts, but none the less found one excuse after another to keep the image at Sinope. Three more years went by, and Timotheus was almost in despair, when the god settled matters by walking himself on board ship.

Tradition is less definite: now associating Serapis with Osarapis (Osiris-Apis), the bull Apis assimilated in death with Osiris, and now with the little hill Sinopeion outside Memphis where stood the temple of the Serapeum. A third and perhaps a more simple hypothesis is also current: that Ptolemy drew his inspiration of the name Serapis from Babylon. If Arrian, a dependable historian, is believed, a sanctuary of Serapis existed in that city, and to it on the eve of Alexander's death Seleucus and others repaired, inviting the god to preserve the hero's life. Ptolemy, possibly one of the company on that occasion, seeking a name for the god of his own creation, may have thought of the Babylonian divinity. But whatever its origin, the image of Serapis of Alexandria was essentially Greek and not Egyptian in form and feature: a god more reminiscent of Zeus than of Osiris. His face was bearded: surrounding his head was a calathus or basket, in his hand a sceptre, and at his feet crouched a three-headed cerberus, a hint of Serapis' domination of the underworld. Soon Isis, a benevolent youthful mother crowned by a crescent moon, holding in her arms the child Horus, joined Serapis to make the Alexandrian triad. "Behold I am come" Apuleius in a later age made Isis cry, "I the mother of all things and all elements, the Queen of Heaven, known and adored by many names and many cults." To house the triad, Ptolemy built on rising ground in the Rhacotis

quarter of Alexandria a temple, the Serapeum,¹ a series of handsome shrines and chapels that, linked together by granite colonnades, formed a spacious quadrangle reached from below by a wide flight of a hundred steps. In the centre of the square was the sanctuary of Serapis, enclosing the image of a god with arms outstretched as if to welcome the sinner.

While Ptolemy was thus occupied, other satraps were fiercely quarrelling among themselves. Cassander in Macedonia was at daggers drawn with Polyperchon holding Greece, Lysimachus in Thrace had thrown in his lot with the first, Antigonus in Asia Minor with the second, and all four protagonists again angled for Ptolemy's support. It was a delicate business: to such a pitch had matters come that no one of Alexander's lieutenants would now confide in a neighbour, much less raise a finger to help him. Self-interest governed the policy of all. Certainly neither Cassander nor Antigonus deserved Ptolemy's support. The first had murdered one heir of the throne, and was presumably awaiting a favourable moment to kill the other: the second talked of his intention to seize Egypt and crush its satrap. That clinched Ptolemy's decision: he promised to support Cassander, he awaited Antigonus' attack. But Antigonus was not in a position to march. He had first to build a fresh fleet to deny Rhodes and Cyprus to the enemy, and lastly to persuade Polyperchon, then in the Peloponnese, to come to his aid. Impatiently Cassander, Lysimachus and Ptolemy issued an ultimatum: if Antigonus wanted peace, he could have it only by conceding Cappadocia and Lycia to Cassander, Lydia to Lysimachus, Mesopotamia to Seleucus, and Syria to Ptolemy.² Stung by this insulting offer, Antigonus counterstruck by promising autonomy to all Greek cities that assisted him, called upon all Macedonians to abandon the murderer of Philip Arrhidaeus, and hurried on his preparations for a campaign against Ptolemy. But the latter promptly answered Antigonus' manifesto by assuring the Greeks that he desired their liberty "as much as Antigonus did," and by dispatching his brother Menelaus with a hundred ships and ten thousand troops to assist Seleucus, holding Cyprus on his behalf.

Hostilities opened indecisively in 311 B.C. Seleucus began with a blockade of Tyre, so rigorous that Antigonus' new fleet could not put to sea, and Ptolemy thought for a moment the campaign was over. Then fortune veered. Bad weather obliged Seleucus to

¹ The column known as "Pompey's pillar" marks to-day its site.

² Diodorus, bk. xi., ch. 4.

abandon the blockade, and Antigonus' admiral pushed his enemy to Cyprus. The tables were turned. To Antigonus' fleet of 250 ships Seleucus, even with Menelaus' timely reinforcement, would oppose less than half that number, and not daring to risk his squadron in an engagement, he transferred his base to Lemnos. That news did not damp Ptolemy's spirit. He ordered Menelaus to land his troops in Cyprus; to dispatch part to frighten Polyperchon out of the Peloponnese, while Ptolemy himself raided Cilicia to support Cassander in Asia Minor. It was all he could do for the moment Cyrenaica had burst into revolt, and the Macedonian garrison were fighting for their lives. Caught thus between two fires, Ptolemy temporized. He was willing to overlook the offence of rebellion, he was prepared even to amnesty the ringleaders, if Cyrenaica made submission. But his terms were scouted, his offer of an amnesty looked upon as a sign of timidity. Nothing but complete independence would satisfy the leaders, and the mob tore in pieces half a dozen commissioners sent by Ptolemy to investigate the grievances of Cyrenaica. There was no more hesitation, no further word of pardon. Magas, son of Berenice by her first husband and Ptolemy's stepson, was bidden to bring this stiffnecked people to their senses. He did so to some purpose until, contrite and humble, the citizens of Cyrene, the capital, begged for mercy.

Their submission set Ptolemy free to take a hand in the greater war. The horizon was clearer. Polyperchon, having come to terms with Cassander, had forsaken Antigonus and evacuated the Peloponnese: so the expedition detached by Menelaus from Cyprus, finding no enemy, had re-crossed the Aegean to raid Pamphylia. That cheerful news was followed by even better: Antigonus' fleet had been caught at anchor and almost destroyed. On the other hand, Cassander had lost ground in Greece, and Antigonus, reconstituting the Federation of the Cyclades with Delos as its capital, had taken all the Greek islands and Cyprus also under his protection. It was a challenge that Ptolemy would have liked to take up. But to do so would uncover Egypt, and prudence persuaded him to concentrate on Cyprus. The Greek islands could wait, but Ptolemy could not permit Cyprus to pass without a struggle to the enemy. He landed on the island and, deposing its nine princelings, declared in turn his own protectorate over it. Encouraged by easy triumph he set to sea and, striking Rhodes, disembarked in Cilicia. There was no resistance: Antigonus was watching his enemies in Europe. Demetrius, his son, was ravaging Greece: so Ptolemy plundered the province at his ease, stayed awhile in Mallos, the capital, and

then returned to Egypt. It had been a successful excursion, a warning to Antigonos to look to his rear.

Ptolemy's outlook on life had altered. The day when he believed fighting to be the only serious occupation for man had passed: his interest lay now in the more humdrum business of administration. But at his elbow was the persuasive Seleucus, a bitter enemy of Antigonos, and at Seleucus' instigation Ptolemy set out to re-occupy Coelesyria and Phoenicia. Conditions seemed auspicious. Antigonos' main army lay on the Hellespont, and only a slender force was in Syria. So at the head of 18,000 foot and 4,000 horse, Macedonians and mercenaries, Ptolemy crossed Sinai and invested Gaza. But Antigonos got wind of the march and, reluctant to abandon his own theatre of war, had bidden his son Demetrius to forestall Ptolemy at Gaza. Demetrius, known later as Poliorcetes or the Taker of Cities, was the apple of his father's eye: a tall and comely young man, an engaging and daring personality. He was at this period no more than a boy: Gaza was his first responsibility, the redoubtable Ptolemy his first enemy, and he hesitated whether to fight or retire. A council of war advised the second course; but as he stood, perplexed and undecided, surveying Ptolemy's formidable battle array, his troops cried with one voice: "Be courageous," and heartened by the cheer, Demetrius threw away uncertainty. The battle went against him. His dispositions were faulty, his left wing was liable to be outflanked, his centre and right a jumble of elephants, cavalry, heavy and light infantry, jostling and impeding each other. Noting the weakness, the experienced Ptolemy transferred his own horse from left to right wing, and in one charge rolled up Demetrius' left flank. Nor could the elephants shake Ptolemy's infantry: sheltering behind an improvised palisade, the phalanx shot down the drivers, and the elephants, maddened by darts and arrows, turned tail, throwing the line into confusion. Demetrius did not try to rally his infantry: thinking the day was lost, he galloped off the field, not drawing rein till he reached Ashdod, thirty miles distant. Tyre fell to assault, Jerusalem by a trick capitulated¹, Phoenicia and Coelesyria submitted.

But only for a month or two. First Seleucus, his greatest asset, departed for Babylon to found yet another empire, the Seleucid, next Demetrius baited a snare into which Cilles, a lieutenant of

¹ "For as he came into the city on a Sabbath as if he would offer sacrifice, he, without any trouble, gained possession of it."—Josephus' *Antiquities of the Jews*, bk. xii., ch. 1.

Ptolemy, rashly walked open-eyed. The son's success warmed Antigonus' old heart. "Here is a young hero," he cried with paternal pride, "who is fit to wear a crown," and certainly Demetrius had no lack of spirit. He continued in his next adventure to make a tolerable peace with the Nabateans, masters of the Rock of Petra, and then advanced on Babylon. He could not hold that prize despite the absence of Seleucus in the distant Himalayas, and, returning home, boldly suggested a descent upon Greece. But Antigonus hesitated: he was still hankering after Egypt. It had been his intention to take Ptolemy by surprise, making Petra his advanced base, until Demetrius' experience of the fighting quality of the Nabateans forced him to discard that plan, and to choose as his line of march to the Nile the border road through Gaza. Rumour magnified his preparations and Ptolemy, a long way from his own base, became nervous. The loss of Cilles' column pointed a moral, and he determined to fall back upon Egypt. In his belief, he had done enough for glory and profit. He had tested his troops in battle, and found their spirit excellent: he had taken some 8,000 prisoners of war to be incorporated in his own army and he had persuaded or forced a company of Jews to exchange Jerusalem for Alexandria. Many of the number went no doubt very willingly. The fame of Alexandria had spread throughout Asia: its streets were reputed to be paved with gold, its welcome to suitable citizens, irrespective of race and religion, was universally acknowledged.

But Ptolemy was hardly back in Alexandria before a truce (311 B.C.) was patched up to last till the boy Alexander was of age. There was need to take breath: the years of continuous war had exhausted all parties, had awakened a general desire for peace. Antigonus, now over seventy years old, desired to conserve his energies for a final trial of strength with Ptolemy: Cassander and Lysimachus to re-organize their respective satrapies: Ptolemy to complete his administrative reforms. So allies and enemies laid down their arms, both consenting to abandon ambitions they could not consummate, both to renounce territory they did not possess. Thus Cassander relinquished his pretensions to Greece, Lysimachus his designs across the Hellespont, Antigonus the invasion of Egypt, and Ptolemy his possession of Phoenicia and Coele-syria. But the truce was hollow: no one of the parties intended to keep his obligations, and unashamedly Cassander committed yet another of the many crimes that stain Macedonian history. Alexander, now sole heir to the empire of his father, was still

prisoner rather than ward of Cassander, his guardian, and half Macedonia murmured at the injustice. There were whispers of conspiracy to kill the guardian, and to set the ward upon the throne. But the murmurs ended in talk: Cassander had his partisans also, and no more scrupulous than he—officers who questioned the boy's fitness to rule, who urged the need of a strong pilot at the helm. Thinking privately that the existence of Alexander imperilled his own future, Cassander ordered the gaoler of the boy and his mother to put both to death.¹

It was the extinction of the great Alexander's seed, the inauguration of a new era. Hegemony was done with, the satrap became a sovereign of any territory he could hold. But the pact of 311 B.C. did not long outlive Cassander's monstrous crime. No participant observed from the first its most important provision—the freedom of all Greek city-states: no one of the contracting parties relinquished their occupation of them. Cassander continued to occupy Athens, Lysimachus to keep territory across the Hellespont, Antigonus to garrison the city states of Asia Minor, and Ptolemy to maintain his grip on Cyprus. At this point, Ptolemy indeed could hardly do otherwise. The Mediterranean had become the heart of the empire, and sovereignty was now as much a matter of supremacy in its waters as supremacy on land. That knowledge drove every satrap to occupy maritime cities, to seek new capitals with access to the sea. Cassander began feverishly to build Thessalonica on the gulf of Salonika, Lysimachus Lysimachia in the Chersonese, and Seleucus Antigonía on the banks of the Syrian Orontes. Ptolemy alone had no need to found a new capital, but, equally alive to the importance of command at sea, he tightened his grip on Cyprus. His hold of the island was precarious, the existence of the protectorate was at stake. Antigonus was at the bottom of the mischief: Menelaus, the viceroy, had already reported that one or two tributary kings of Cyprus were corresponding with that implacable enemy of Ptolemy, that the remainder contemplated following the same course. For answer Ptolemy bade Menelaus make an example of the chief culprit, and the viceroy offered Nicoles, king of Paphos, choice between death at his own hand or death by that of the public executioner. Unhesitatingly Nicoles chose the first alternative, and his wife and her ladies chose to die too. A tragic and melancholy episode in the history of

¹ The date of the crime cannot be fixed with any certainty. P. Jouguet marks it between 311 and 309 B.C.: *L'Impérialisme Macedonien et l'Hellenisation de l'Orient*, p. 173.

Cyprus. Meanwhile Leonidas, another lieutenant despatched to create a diversion in Cilicia, was in difficulties, and Ptolemy sailed to his support. He expelled from Phaselis, Xanthus, and other Greek cities of Asia Minor the garrisons of Antigonos, he bestowed upon the provinces of Pamphylia, Lycia, and Caria the autonomy promised in the pact of 311 B.C., he took possession of the island of Cos. He posed in short as an apostle of Greek freedom.

Then in the summer of 308 B.C. he steered for Greece. It is a little difficult to understand the reasons that prompted the incursion into a country that hitherto had attracted him only as a nursery of traders, administrators and soldiers. No doubt his rivals were equally in need of Greek brains and muscles, and conceivably demand was beginning to outstrip supply. That indeed seems the only reasonable hypothesis which explains Ptolemy's sudden interest in Greece, a desire to steal a march upon his fellow satraps in the recruiting market by professing to sympathize with Greek aspirations. He had never before left Egypt uncovered, and he was taking a risk in doing so on this occasion. Less likely is the theory that he had caught the prevailing malady—ambition for empire—and was angling for Greek support. That ambition would have been foreign to his whole preceding policy: outside Coelesyria, Cyprus and Cyrenaica, he seems to have coveted sovereignty of no territory. On Andros he bestowed the right of coining its own money, on Delos complete autonomy, on Megara, Corinth and Sicyon the same gift. He prolonged his stay on the Isthmus of Corinth to witness the Isthmian games, to invite representatives of all city-states to meet him there. It was not a very successful business from Ptolemy's point of view. He spoke of his need of supplies and men: the assembly listened but offered no help. None the less he was reluctant to return to Egypt empty-handed, and marriage seemed a dignified escape from the embarrassment. Cleopatra, sister of Alexander the Great, was still a widow: Cassander, Lysimachus and Antigonos had all at one time or another been pretenders for her hand, but experience with Perdiccas had made Cleopatra shy of the satrap suitor, until Ptolemy presented himself. He was a more attractive match: a sober man, reputed to be honest and generous. So, following a little hesitation, Cleopatra consented to become his wife. There could have been little love in the affair, since the man was past sixty and the woman not much younger. It was rather a dynastic marriage common enough in these times, and Ptolemy in typical

Macedonian fashion left Berenice's feelings out of his calculations. But the marriage was never consummated. Once again Cleopatra got as far as Sardis, once again fortune was against her. Determined to deny Ptolemy the prize, Antigonus slew the bride.

That crime broke the last pretences of peace between Antigonus and Ptolemy, and each waited on the other to make the first move. But neither stirred for the moment. Antigonus was preoccupied with beautifying his new capital Antigonía, Ptolemy too cautious to take the offensive. Then tension slackened. Antigonus decided to carry the war into Greece, commissioned his son Demetrius to seize Athens and expel Cassander's garrison from the city. So Demetrius sailed from Ephesus with 250 vessels of war, rounded Cape Sunium, disembarked at the Piræus, and spoke of restoring to Athens her ancient liberties. Demetrius of Phalerum, Cassander's lieutenant, retired to Thebes; the garrison, hemmed into the citadel of the Munychia, capitulated. Transported with joy, Athens heaped honours upon the victor and his father: its citizens gave to each the proud title of King, speaking of them both as their deliverers from the tyranny of the Macedonian. Demetrius found the air of Athens to his liking: he indulged in two matrimonial experiences, he had other adventures with ladies of lesser virtue. Wine and women were always his besetting sin, and in Greece as elsewhere he took his fill of both. A pretty face and a flask of wine were poison to him. Indisposed on one occasion, he took to his bed, and Antigonus went to inquire into his health. As he entered the sick-room, he encountered a veiled figure hastily leaving it. "The fever has just left me," whispered Demetrius huskily, raising himself in bed to welcome his father. "Yes," drily answered Antigonus, "I met it at the doorway going out."¹

Ptolemy's turn came next. Elated by his success in Greece, Demetrius attacked Cyprus. The appearance of the enemy's fleet off the island took Menelaus by surprise: he had neither the ships nor the troops to keep Demetrius from landing, and, appealing to Alexandria for both, he entrenched himself in Salamis. Ptolemy heard the prayer, laid hand upon all shipping that happened to be in port, thrust 10,000 mercenaries on board, and hurried himself with 140 sail to the relief. He was too late at his rendezvous off Citium: Salamis was then beleaguered by land and sea, and there was nothing left but to force the blockade. But the odds were too heavy, the enemy were superior at sea in number and in armament. Leading the left wing of his fleet, Ptolemy sounded

¹ Plutarch's *Lives*, *Demetrius*.

the signal to engage, and the two squadrons dashed at one another. The combat was close: locked one to another by their oars, opposing ships could neither pursue nor retire. The action lasted until sundown, when Ptolemy drew off with the loss of half the transports and a third of their escorts. It was the end of all operations: Demetrius' triumph was complete, and Ptolemy abandoned Cyprus.

The news was welcome to Antigonus, and his heart swelled with the pride of victory. He assumed the title of King, he bound his head with the diadem, the conventional symbol of royalty in Asia, and waited for Ptolemy to sue for mercy. His vanity overreached itself: submission was the last thought in Ptolemy's mind. Back in Egypt he had recovered his spirit, was rebuilding his navy and training a second army. For Antigonus to call himself King of Asia when he held only a corner of the continent seemed to the sober Ptolemy foolish; but he liked the dignity of kingship well enough to style himself also King of Egypt. And since he was accustomed to do nothing by halves, he desired the priesthood to furnish him with the appropriate cartouches, traditional indication of sovereignty in Egypt. The practice, an ancient one, had grown with the centuries. Earlier Pharaohs, on accession to the throne, had been content with enclosing their individual name in a single cartouche: more arrogantly the Twelfth Dynasty had added a second cartouche containing their official designations. Alexander had followed the example: had taken the throne-name of a Pharaoh and Egyptianized his own as Alksantres. Ptolemy did likewise: spoke of himself as Ptulmis, beloved of Amen, son of Rē, and supplied his beloved wife, the Basilissa or Queen, with a special cartouche enclosing the word Berenice. Cassander, Lysimachus and Seleucus followed suit, and thus there were now four kings where none had been before. Plutarch's conclusion that "a single flattering voice had accomplished a revolution in the world" was a worthy epitaph.

It was high time in Antigonus' opinion to punish these impertinent copyists, and he proposed to begin with Ptolemy. There was no need now to trust to surprise for success: at the head of 80,000 foot, 8,000 horse, and 83 elephants, Antigonus imagined that he would encounter no resistance. But the campaign (306 B.C.) proved more difficult than he had anticipated. First his fleet and supply transports lay for days becalmed off Gaza, then scarcity of water and food held up the army's march across the Sinai desert. Nor were Antigonus' troubles at an end when the Nile came in view.

The river was in flood, the stream impracticable to ford, and a heavy sea running on the coast prevented Demetrius from landing his shipping material and engines of war. Supplies were running short, and units began to pass over to the enemy, tempted by the bribe of a silver talent to officers and two minas to all soldiers who deserted. Moreover, the enemy lay securely entrenched on the further bank of the river, and when the passage of the river had been accomplished, Antigonos would have to carry a line of redoubts held in strength. Perplexed by the situation, he left decision to a council of war: "Was he to stay and fight or retire to Syria and return when the Nile fell?" The council found no difficulty in answering: victory was uncertain, retreat the wiser policy. Ptolemy was jubilant: once again the Nile had been a trusty ally. The disappointment inflamed still further Antigonos' anger, and he looked about to vent it upon Ptolemy's friends. Rhodes was one. Between that island and Alexandria a healthy but friendly rivalry had sprung up. Both were ports of transit, each profited from the competition of the other. Thus Egyptian exports to the east went through Rhodes, and Rhodian exports for the west through Alexandria. Antigonos thought to break the connection by seizing Rhodian and Alexandrian cargoes at sea, and Ptolemy took measures to defend his ships. Rhodes timidly was content to remonstrate. But no protest was likely to stop Antigonos, and in the summer of 304 B.C., Demetrius sailed from Cyprus with 200 ships of war and blockaded the island.

Undismayed, the Rhodian senate prepared for war, implored Ptolemy's assistance, called upon all citizens to take up arms, decreeing honours to those who fell in defence of the island, and promising dowries to girls who married survivors. In turn Demetrius actively pressed on the attack. Of mechanical mind, he designed battering towers and rams twice the size of the great Helepolis he had built for his siege of Salamis: he handled his ships and engines of war boldly in support of the operations on land.¹ Success inclined now to one side, now to the other. Assault was met by sortie, mining by counter-mining: yet despite superiority in numbers and artillery, Demetrius could not break through Rhodes' obstinate defence. He began to build higher and heavier testudos and towers, and while awaiting their construction he tried bribery. The experiment led to nothing: he pitched upon a Macedonian, a scientific officer lent by Ptolemy to the defence, and that officer at once communicated the design to the senate of the

¹ Diodorus, bk. xx., ch. 4.

island. At this point, Ptolemy was straining to assist the besieged. He contrived to land 30,000 tons of corn and a contingent of picked troops: he was preparing to make greater sacrifices when Demetrius, losing patience, proposed an armistice. Consulted by the senate, Ptolemy advised its acceptance, and Demetrius, reembarking, sailed for Greece. To Ptolemy the island offered its humble and grateful homage: the senate conferred upon him the title of Soter or Saviour, set up his statue in the market-place, and consecrated to his eternal memory a sacred grove.

Set free from Rhodes, Demetrius sailed for Greece, forced Cassander to raise his siege of Athens, cleared the Peloponnesus of the enemy, resuscitated the League of Corinth (302 B.C.), and advanced into Macedonia. These successes demonstrated the futility of expecting peace while Antigonos and Demetrius lived to make war, and Cassander, Lysimachus, Seleucus and Ptolemy formed a fresh coalition to crush once and for ever father and son. Conditions this time were more favourable: it seemed possible to pin Antigonos down to Syria and immobilize Demetrius in Greece. So Lysimachus advanced into Asia Minor, Seleucus marched up the Euphrates: Ptolemy occupied Coelesyria, while Cassander held up Demetrius. But Antigonos, despite his eighty years, had not lost his instinct for war. Bidding Demetrius to evacuate Greece, he crossed the Taurus mountains and outflanked Lysimachus; then, joining hands with his son, fell upon his adversaries at Ipsus (301 B.C.). But age had set its mark upon him: he left all to his son, and Demetrius was no match for antagonists who had served their apprenticeship in war under the incomparable Alexander. Thus battle went against him, and Antigonos, overwhelmed, fell on the field. Seeing the day was lost, Demetrius fled to Greece: but Athens wanted no more "liberators" or "kings" within its walls, and the Peloponnesus answered the fugitive's appeal for assistance in the same sense.

Ptolemy had contributed little to the cause of the coalition, and nothing to the victory of Ipsus. He had waited until Antigonos crossed the Taurus, and then leisurely advanced into Syria. It was no more than a military promenade: Tyre, Sidon, and Byblus had opened their gates, and the road to Asia Minor was clear. But in place of taking it, he stayed in Tyre until rumour that Antigonos had overthrown Lysimachus in Phrygia frightened him into a hasty retreat. He was glad enough to go: his heart was not in the business. He had joined the coalition with misgiving: he hoped that punishment would descend upon Antigonos, but so

long as that implacable enemy kept his hands off Egypt, he was at heart indifferent to his fate. Moreover, he felt a grudge against Cassander and Cassander's allies. No one of them had come to his support when Antigonus, five years earlier, had invaded Egypt: no one of them, Ptolemy knew by experience, would raise a finger to assist him in the future. The decision cost him dear in the end: the lesson of Triparadiso (321 B.C.) had been lost. There a redistribution of Alexander's empire had omitted to take him into account, and the victors of Ipsus were behaving in the same way. In dividing the spoil, Cassander, Lysimachus, and Seleucus left Ptolemy out of their calculation. In vain the victim asserted that Coele Syria had been the price of his support of the coalition: he was answered that he had done nothing to deserve reward. Stung by the reply, Ptolemy promptly reoccupied Coele Syria, and Seleucus, to whom the province had been given, hesitated between dislodging an old friend or letting himself be tricked of his rights. In the end, memory of earlier obligations carried the day: Ptolemy had provided a refuge when Antigonus sought to destroy him, had assisted him to recover Babylon, and Seleucus could not forget the debt. So he left his old ally Ptolemy in possession, promising himself "to consider the best way of treating friends who seized more than their rights." Thus Coele Syria passed into the keeping of the Ptolemies, until a later sovereign lost it for good and all.

Content with the triumph, Ptolemy turned with relief to the encouragement of learning. Brought up in a court that patronized philosophers and men of letters, culture had a mysterious attraction for him, and now that he had become a king, he resolved to follow the example of Philip and his son Alexander the Great. Meditation widened the ideal and ambition pushed him a step farther. Hitherto Ptolemy had thought of Alexandria only in terms of commerce; he speculated now upon obliging the Greek world to acknowledge its supremacy also in scholarship. The hour was propitious. Athenian culture had fallen on evil days: the genius of Plato and Aristotle had found no successors, the inspiration of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides had vanished. Oratory had perished with Demosthenes, history with Thucydides. Moreover, Ptolemy reflected that he could well afford the luxury of entertaining philosophers and men of letters. Honest administration had accomplished a miracle in Egypt: revenue was growing, and Ptolemy was able to put by handsome economies. Nor did he anticipate difficulty in persuading men of established reputation

in the world of learning to join him in Alexandria: to such a pitch of indigence had culture come that a master found no pupils, and a pupil no masters.

Conception speedily passed into execution: to Alexandria there flocked numbers of men distinguished in one or other branch of learning, one and all eager to be the guests of this generous paymaster and hospitable host. Among the first to arrive were Apelles and Antiphilus the painters, Euclid the mathematician, Herophilus the physician, Hecataeus the historian, Diodorus the rhetorician, Stilpo and Theodorus the philosophers, Philetas the poet, and Zenodotus the grammarian. The majority, rejoicing in the comfort of a court, stopped on: others, refusing to live on the bounty of a king, made their bow to Ptolemy and departed. Of the small minority Stilpo of Megara was one, a figure of interest and curiosity whom Ptolemy would have been glad to keep. Men who crossed words with this irritable philosopher usually regretted the encounter: his caustic tongue and quickness of repartee alarmed even his most faithful admirers. Demetrius, the son of Antigonus, had been one of the number. Following the sack of Megara by his troops, Demetrius visited Stilpo, inquiring if the philosopher had lost any of his possessions. "Why should I," Stilpo answered ironically, "when I have met no one of your people who can take away knowledge?" Not all the guests were above bickering. Stilpo had an aversion for Diodorus, Antiphilus was jealous of Apelles, and Ptolemy mischievously encouraged the jealousy. For Antiphilus he conceived a regard perhaps because he too disliked Apelles. But the latter took a subtle revenge. Retiring in dudgeon to Cos, he painted Ptolemy welcoming calumny in the form of Antiphilus, supported by the figures of envy, craft and deceit. The story got about, and other distinguished men fought shy of invitations to Alexandria. Theophrastus, pupil and successor of Aristotle, declined to come: Menander, the bright star of contemporary Attic comedy, of whose plays one critic could only say: "O Menander, which is life, which is the copy?" also refused.

But Ptolemy's entertainment was plain. Ostentation and display were discountenanced: the table equipment was so meagre that the eileatrus or high steward of the court had to borrow plates and goblets from his friends. Suppers of the type given by Caranus, a young Macedonian, on the eve of his wedding, when the guests received handsome silver bowls and golden chaplets as mementos, and partook of geese, hares, partridges and turtle doves, followed

by a roasted boar and sweetmeats,¹ were not to be had in Ptolemy's household. A bowl of lentils and a dish of tripe "stewed in vinegar"² washed down with country wines, Mareotic and Taeniotic, and for sauce good conversation, was the fare that Ptolemy offered his guests. Invited at one such meal to point out the shortest cut to mathematical studies, Euclid answered shortly: "There is no royal road to supremacy in my subject." Of the men of learning who visited Alexandria as Ptolemy's guests, Euclid is the best known to posterity. He was a unique genius: predecessors perhaps had traced the way, but their logic was less faultless, their synthesis less exact than his. Next in merit were the two physicians Herophilus of Chalcedon and Erasistratus of Cos. For dogmatism Herophilus substituted observation, for empiricism experience. The first physician to study anatomy, his research centred round the brain, the nerves, the liver, and the lungs. Erasistratus improved upon Herophilus' labours. He elucidated the true function of the brain, emphasized the importance of the nervous system, and ridiculed the practice of excessive bleeding. Classical authority, on the other hand, records the name of no Egyptian at Ptolemy's table: the Egyptian priesthood, once the repository of human knowledge, seems to have been ignored, though Manetho, a Greek-speaking Egyptian and acolyte of Heliopolis, wrote a history of the Pharaohs under the title of *Aiguptiaca*.

Banquets and entertainments could never make Alexandria supreme in the intellectual world, and if Ptolemy coveted that ambition, he must establish and endow a permanent house for men of culture and learning. That task was beyond his powers, and he looked about for a Greek to superintend its creation. Demetrius of Phalerum, at one time Cassander's representative in Athens, seemed to be the man he sought: a philosopher, administrator, writer and orator. In oratory indeed Demetrius towered above his contemporaries: a speaker remarkable for his elegant diction and the use of metaphor and allegory. His knowledge of all that pertained to philosophy and letters was encyclopaedic. No subject came amiss to him: and his scholarship astonished listeners and readers alike. His advice to build an academy or temple of the Muses in Alexandria was gratefully accepted. There arose thus hard by the royal palace the celebrated Mouseion, an imposing edifice. Through a handsome court shaded with trees and flanked

¹ Athenaeus, bk. iv., 81.

² *Ibid.*, bk. iii., 58.

by graceful cloisters, the visitors entered a lofty hall furnished with recesses, wherein masters taught and disciples listened. Life was communal: teachers and pupils dined at the royal expense, debated, walked or meditated in the cloisters. There were rules concerning precedence and rank, there was a president of studies under the attractive title of the Priest of the Muses. It was an ambitious conception, a tribute to Ptolemy's passion for culture.

As the king approached his eightieth birthday, he fell to pondering over the succession. It was a heritage that any prince might covet: a compact and prosperous kingdom, untroubled by revolution, peopled by a peaceful and industrious race. Two sons of Ptolemy could pretend to the throne: one a Ptolemy surnamed Ceraunus or the Thunderbolt, child of Eurydice, the other another Ptolemy known later as Philadelphus, the son of Berenice—and the father hesitated between the pair. In principle the first had the stronger claims. His legitimacy was incontestable, his mother was sister of Cassander, now King of Macedonia, and he was the elder. But he was a passionate and vindictive young man, of doubtful judgement and uncertain discretion, whereas Philadelphus inherited his mother's even temper and his father's common sense, and Ptolemy felt the succession would be safer in the hands of the younger. So much was clear, yet he doubted whether the Macedonian soldier, who had the last word, would approve a choice that ignored the rights of primogeniture, and in perplexity he invited the opinion of Demetrius of Phalerum. Privately Demetrius agreed with Aristotle's apophthegm that reasonable government would never be till "kings are philosophers or philosophers are kings," but since that truth in this imperfect world was little likely to be acknowledged, he thought that primogeniture was a better claim to a throne than looks and manners. The counsel was not what Ptolemy hoped to hear: Demetrius approved the king's resolution to abdicate, but begged him to choose Ceraunus. Out of his immense erudition he supported the advice by citing instances when misfortune had followed the exclusion of the older heir. So Ptolemy bent his ear to whispers from another quarter. The court, in no mind to serve the savage Ceraunus, respectfully begged their royal master to observe the example of the gods. Was not Zeus himself the younger child of Cronus?¹ The hint was taken, and the Macedonian troops accepted Berenice's son as their future king.

¹ Callimachus, *Hymn to Zeus*.

So Ptolemy in 285 B.C. stepped from the throne, announcing with characteristic modesty that he esteemed it "a greater honour to be the father of a king than to possess a kingdom."¹ Nor would he keep the privileges of royalty: divesting himself of them, he stood thenceforth among the palace guards, a humble soldier, saluting the goings and comings of his son, the king.

¹ Justinus, bk. xvi., ch. 2.

CHAPTER III

PTOLEMY PHILADELPHUS

285-247 B.C.

PHILADELPHUS,¹ son of Ptolemy Soter and his wife Berenice, had been born under a lucky star: at the age of twenty-five he found himself seated on a throne uncontested by pretenders, enjoying a patrimony unencumbered with liabilities. Nor was this his only good fortune: he had youth and health, charm, good looks and good manners. But attributes of this type, unless supported by judgement and character, do not carry a ruler far, and those qualities elemental to a king Philadelphus in the first years of his reign showed little sign of possessing. Absorbed in the endeavour to please and be pleased, he neglected more important duties. The misfortune was not perhaps wholly of his own making: his early environment had been enough to ruin any prince. Born in the winter of 309-308 B.C. in the island of Cos, he had spent the years of childhood encompassed by an adoring crowd of women.

The birth of a son by his cherished wife Berenice left the father unmoved: the newcomer was only one of the many children, legitimate and illegitimate, who claimed his paternity, and Ptolemy paid little attention to the royal nurseries. But whispers presently came to his ears, and he recalled mother and child to Egypt. It was too late: the mischief had been done. In Alexandria he grew into a selfish, wayward boy, and thinking education the best corrective, Ptolemy looked about for preceptors. There was at least no dearth of candidates: every pensioner of the Mouseion hurried to offer his services, and Ptolemy's perplexity grew as he scanned the list of volunteers. It was a nice point to distinguish between their claims: nicer still to decide whether he should entrust instruction to a philosopher or a poet or a grammarian. Macedonian tradition dictated the first, Ptolemy's private instinct was for the second. In earlier life he would not have hesitated, but now that he was a king he felt less sure. Philosophers no longer blindly followed the maxims of Aristotle: a new school had arisen, questioning the right

¹ Contemporaries spoke of him only as "Ptolemy, son of Ptolemy." The name Philadelphus more properly belongs to his sister and second wife Arsinoë II.

divine to rule, doubting the existence of the superman. Trusting then to his own instinct, he selected Strato of Lampsacus and Philetas of Cos as joint tutors of the boy. Their teaching was unlikely to be subversive. The first was a physicist pure and simple, and for science Ptolemy had a tender regard; the second a little man of letters so frail that he carried lead to prevent the wind blowing him off his feet.

Conforming to tradition, Ptolemy advised the court of Philadelphus' succession, and invited the army to ratify the election. In Macedonia it had been a brief and businesslike affair. The army fell in on parade, cavalry on the right, heavy infantry in the centre, light on the left: the candidate rode down the line and returned to his starting point to await the verdict. Ptolemy had in mind no other procedure: but issues were changing, and simplicity no longer fashionable. Alexandria in the days of Ptolemy Soter was excessively dull, and the Greek thought wistfully of the gay life of Corinth and Athens, where hetaeras and athletes jostled matrons and philosophers at every street corner. His only choice lay between listening to the performance of a play in the theatre or watching a troop of young girls marching in procession to the shrine of Aphrodite: insipid entertainment at the best, and he envied his more fortunate Egyptian neighbours in the provinces. Their calendar was full of sacred days, and the people kept them all religiously. Why then was Ptolemy so stingy in the matter of holidays and festivals, murmured the Greek community? Their dissatisfaction was the greater by the knowledge that they were making money fast, and their womenkind panting to spend it. Even Egyptians resident in the Rhacotis quarter of the city were little better off. Elsewhere, in Neith, Memphis and Thebes, their fellow-countrymen were perpetually celebrating one religious festival or another: Alexandria alone did not follow Egyptian procedure. Marking the discontentment and prompted by the ambition to please and be pleased, Philadelphus determined to commemorate his election as king in a manner more befitting to the occasion than a simple military ceremony. It was in his mind to offer Alexandria a spectacle more magnificent than any city of Greece could provide, a pageant of which he would be the chief figure. His father was less impressed. A sober and frugal Macedonian, money, he thought, could be put to better use than providing amusement for an empty-headed people: better go supperless to bed in his judgement than to rise the next morning a poor man. But he was old and argument tired him, so Philadelphus won his way.

It was the first and most elaborate of the many pageants that he staged during his long reign. Within sight of the Stadium was pitched for the accommodation of distinguished strangers a gigantic tent fifteen cubits high, curtained with crimson hangings, strewn with lilies and roses, so that the guests walked to their couches over "a most divine meadow." Bidding the visitors welcome, Ptolemy, Berenice, and Philadelphus took their places in the pageant and the procession began its march. Led by Lucifer, star of the morning, and closed by Hesperus, star of the evening, there passed in file the gods of Egypt and Greece, the temple images of Osiris, of Ptah, of Dionysus and of Zeus. Keeping the roadway clear walked the Sileni, robed in purple and scarlet, behind the images walked a company of Satyrs, followed by a man of gigantic stature bearing the golden horn of Amalthea, and by a woman of surpassing loveliness waving in one hand a simple palm branch, in the other a sprig of peace-blossom. Next appeared a life-sized image of Dionysus seated on a golden throne drawn by 180 slaves, escorted by an army of priests, priestesses and initiates, and at their heels a representation of the bedchamber of Semele, wife of the god. Wine flowed freely, music rose and fell incessantly. Each item of the programme seemed a greater wonder than its predecessor. It was generally agreed that there never had been, that there never could be again, so magnificent a pageant.¹

The most absorbing spectacle was still to come, a long train of wild beasts and birds unknown to Egypt. First a hundred ponderous elephants harnessed to chariots, four to a team, next herds of buffaloes, antelopes, gemsbok, ostriches, gnus, zebras, and goats, ridden by boys attired as charioteers, and finally caged lions, panthers, tigers, a rhinoceros, and a white bear. Following the wild beasts walked attendants carrying parrots, peacocks, and pheasants from Ethiopia, cowmen leading bulls from India, Arabia and Caucasus, and shepherds driving sheep of Greece and Ethiopia. There was a brief pause. The cheering ceased, the gossip died down: the royal party were approaching. Preceded by a life-sized image of the great Alexander, Ptolemy with Berenice and Philadelphus appeared. A roar of welcome broke out: the cheers grew louder when the word passed that on Ptolemy's head lay a crown made of 10,000 gold pieces, when the eye caught sight of other golden

¹ Athenaeus, bk. v., ch. 35, reproduces the account given by Callixenus of Rhodes. The date of the pageant is uncertain. Bevan (*The Ptolemaic Dynasty*, ch. 4) suggested the year 278 B.C., the fourth anniversary of the first Ptolemy's death. Callixenus seems to infer that Ptolemy and Berenice took part in the procession.

crowns and chaplets born by pages and ladies of the court, of waggons loaded with gold and silver plate that lumbered along in the rear. The procession made the round of the city, returned to the Stadium, and there halted for the last scene of the pageant. Escorted by the bodyguard, Ptolemy advanced into the centre of the arena, accepted from the delegates of states and cities Alexander had freed from the Persian yoke fresh gifts of golden crowns in memory of the services that great commander had rendered to the world.

It was also old Ptolemy's leave-taking of his subjects: within a few months he was dead, and all Egypt was mourning the loss of a wise and benevolent governor. Upon his place of burial Alexandria was agreed. The Sema designed to hold the body of Alexander, still reposing in Memphis in its golden coffin, was empty, and the Macedonian veteran soldiers who had followed Ptolemy to Egypt from Babylon clamoured that in death as in life commander and lieutenant must lie together. The Sema had been built in the heart of the city facing the Tycheum boulevard. Descending below ground-level by a flight of steps, the pious pilgrim entered through a roofless atrium into the tomb. Above the tomb there stood a handsome mortuary chapel; adjoining the chapel subsidiary shrines. The ceremony of laying the two bodies to rest was a moving spectacle: the last journey of two kings through the streets of a city traced by one, built by another. Nor was this the only filial compliment paid by Philadelphus to his father. He proclaimed him to be the saviour god, he established a state cult to his memory, he decreed a festival to be held in his honour every fourth year. Alexandria spoke approvingly of Philadelphus' sense of a son's duty. The father, a hero in life, deserved in death translation to Olympus. Indeed, there was nothing blasphemous or unreasonable in posthumous divinity either to the Greek or to the Egyptian mind, as the approval given to Ptolemy's own deification of Alexander abundantly testified. No doubt in each instance policy was partly responsible for the cult. It was in the interest of the first Ptolemy to establish one that would appeal to Greeks and Egyptians alike, it was in the interest of the son to strengthen his dynastic claim to the throne.

Meanwhile war was again impending over the Greek world: as Ptolemy had foreseen, the alliance between Lysimachus and Seleucus did not last. Of the satraps who in Babylon had divided among themselves Alexander's empire, only these two now survived: the first paramount north of the Hellespont, the second south of the Straits. Following the death of Antigonus at Ipsus in

201 B.C., the pair had been busy in consolidating their dominions, and Lysimachus, having added Macedonia to the satrapy of Thrace, hoped to achieve through marriage with Arsinoë, daughter of Ptolemy, a useful ally. Later, to draw tighter the tie uniting the two families, Lysimachus proposed that Philadelphus should marry another Arsinoë, his daughter by Nicæa, and Ptolemy readily agreed. It was a very suitable match in point of age and of station, and the bride did very well for herself. Philadelphus was a catch in the Macedonian marriage-market, the court of Egypt kept more cheerful company than that of Thrace, and above all she had extricated herself from the clutches of an overbearing stepmother.¹ As for Philadelphus, he was not in a position to object. The succession was still unsettled, since Ceraunus, still in Alexandria, was hoping that Ptolemy would nominate him as his heir. The marriage might have turned out worse. The two lived comfortably together: there was a family of three children, Ptolemy surnamed Euergetes, a second boy Lysimachus, and a girl Berenice, wife later of Antiochus of Syria, the son of Seleucus.

Then in 281 B.C. the storm burst: Seleucus and Lysimachus sprang at one another's throats, and in the struggle both perished. The responsibility of Seleucus' death lay with Ceraunus. Once the question of the succession had been decided in Philadelphus' favour, Ceraunus shook off the dust of Egypt, and urged Seleucus to attack Egypt. But Seleucus, with his eye on Macedonia, would not move, and Ceraunus appealed to Lysimachus. It was a court where he might expect a welcome: his half-sister Arsinoë was queen, his full sister Lysandra the wife of Agathocles, son and heir of the king. But it was also a court where conspiracy, murder and slander were commonplaces: Lysimachus was a puppet in the hands of his wife, Agathocles the confidant if not the lover of the queen. Presently the lovers fell out: Agathocles disappeared and his widow Lysandra fled to Seleucus. Her arrival offered the last a convenient excuse to march against Lysimachus, and at Corupedion (281 B.C.) in Lydia the two enemies met. The day went against Lysimachus, and Seleucus leisurely made his way into Europe. His decision was taken: he would reserve Macedonia for himself, assign Thrace to the children of Lysandra, and bequeath Syria and Mesopotamia to his son Antiochus. It was against the counsel of the famous oracle of Miletus. "Do not cross the

¹ To avoid confusion history usually indicates Arsinoë wife of Lysimachus as Arsinoë II, and her stepdaughter Arsinoë the first wife of Philadelphus as Arsinoë I.

Hellespont," it had urged Seleucus. "Let Asia be sufficient for thee." He had better have taken to heart the warning: hardly had he set foot in Europe when Ceraunus ran him through the body. Then, placing the diadem on his head, the murderer called upon the survivors of Corupedion to make him king. But he had powerful enemies first to overcome, among them his half-sister Arsinoë, claiming the throne for her children by Lysimachus, and Ceraunus determined to destroy the family; but Arsinoë lay entrenched in Cassandria, and try as he would, Ceraunus could not pierce her defence. Meanwhile time was pressing: other pretenders to the crown of Macedonia, Antigonus Gonatas, grandson of the old satrap Antigonus, and Antiochus, son of Seleucus, were in the field, and Ceraunus changed his tactics. He offered his half-sister marriage, he undertook to declare her eldest boy his heir. Rashly Arsinoë accepted his word, and for once her intuition was astray. Slipping through the unguarded gates, Ceraunus entered Cassandria, butchered the younger children, and drove the mother a fugitive to Samothrace. It was no safe refuge, and Ceraunus was meditating pursuit when an irruption of Gauls into Macedonia bade him think of his own safety. He marched to expel the enemy, and lost both the day and his life.

But if Samothrace provided an asylum, it offered the widowed Arsinoë II no more: on the island she was the most miserable figure of all miserable women, a queen deserted by her friends and bereft of her husband. Nor did the future promise better fortune. Antigonus Gonatas had seized Macedonia and to dispossess him without the backing of a powerful ally was impossible. Despair settled on Arsinoë: she could almost have welcomed death. Then the idea of re-marriage crossed her mind. She was still rich, still handsome enough to attract suitors: but in her distracted world reputable husbands were hard to come by, and so Arsinoë looked not for love but for settlement. Ambition had long since displaced in her heart passion, and from that angle she schooled herself to consider the future. She had nothing to offer her powerful neighbours, Antigonus Gonatas of Macedonia and Antiochus, son of Seleucus, and there remained thus only her brother Philadelphus, whose court would at least provide a safer haven than that of Samothrace. She never doubted her reception in Alexandria. Philadelphus and she had always been good friends: she had adored him as a boy, she was prepared to continue to adore him as a man. Young and inexperienced, Philadelphus obviously stood in need of a sagacious woman. That insipid child Arsinoë I, her brother's wife, and her own

step-daughter, would withdraw to her nurseries, while she, the sister, remained the power behind the throne. So Arsinoë II, the widow of Lysimachus, came to Egypt, and Philadelphus made her welcome. But the wife took umbrage at her stepmother's airs of patronage, and a section of the court urged her to strike back. Arsinoë I rashly listened until, bewitched by two go-betweens, Amyntas, a general, and Chrysippus, a physician, she fell into a trap. A whisper of the talk had escaped, and Arsinoë II countered by publicly accusing her stepdaughter of treason. That ominous word startled Philadelphus: the ringleaders were arrested and executed, and Arsinoë I was banished to Coptos. In Coptos the repudiated queen dragged out the rest of her life. It was a dreary exile, relieved only by the attentions of Shenu-Sher, the high priest and steward, "a man of arithmetic, a very Thoth in accuracy," of whom it was said that "of beauty beside him there is none." On a basalt slab, the kindly Shenu-Sher recounts the charms of the fallen queen, "the mistress of two lands, wearing the two diadems, the principal royal wife."¹

The way was now clear, and the sister Arsinoë promptly married her brother Philadelphus. It was incest in Greek belief: but Zeus had taken his sister Hera to wife, and the sycophantic court of Alexandria applauded the match. Alone Demetrius of Phalerum and Sotades the satirist dared denounce it as a crime against Heaven. Both paid dearly for their temerity. Mortified by Demetrius' outspoken disapproval and furious at Sotades' coarse wit, Philadelphus expelled the first and ordered Patroclus, his admiral, to drown the second. As for the Egyptian people, the marriage of a king with his sister was not only legitimate but desirable, in that it assured the divinity of the heir to the throne. So strong was tradition on the point that the claim to the succession in default of male issue of a daughter born of the First or Royal queen ranked higher than that of a boy born of a royal concubine. Religion also consecrated the practice. In marrying his sister, the king was following the example of Osiris, who took Isis his sister to wife.

There was no issue to the marriage, and nothing is known of the terms on which the pair lived. Presumably intimacy stopped at fraternal relations, and while Philadelphus consoled himself with mistresses, Arsinoë devoted herself to the cares of government.

¹ W. Petrie, *Koptos*, p. 19, London, 1896, also basalt slab exhibit No. 70,031, Cairo Museum.

But the union at least was made the occasion of another costly pageant, wherein the king figured in Greek eyes as Adonis, his sister-wife, the new queen, as Aphrodite, and the pair in Egyptian eyes as Osiris and Isis. Thus the parade commemorated at once union on earth and association with heaven. Seated on golden thrones, the royal couple passed through the streets of the capital, preceded by the customary priests, followed by the usual menagerie of strange beasts and birds. At the side of the king's car marched the great officers of the temples, some bearing the precious books of Thoth, others supporting images of Egyptian and Greek gods: behind the car was a long line of singers, soothsayers, scribes, keepers of the temple wardrobes, prophets and interpreters of oracles.

Other pageants followed. Berenice, wife of the first Ptolemy and mother of Philadelphus and Arsinoë II, was dead, and a parasitical court whispered that Isis had translated this dead queen to Heaven. The Feast of Osiris was a convenient opportunity to celebrate the honour, and the royal pair determined to do so with becoming magnificence. The entire town joined in the ceremony, hoping to catch a glimpse of the king and queen. Among the spectators were two ladies, Gorgo and Praxinoë. It was difficult to catch a glimpse of the procession: so dense was the press that standing room was hardly obtainable. "What is to become of us?" whispered Praxinoë. "My best summer veil is positively torn in two." Then adding pensively: "But we are all on the right side of the door, as the bridegroom said when he had shut himself in with his bride." By dint of claspings hands they found a place at last, and fell to admiring the brilliant procession. Their screams and remarks first amused, then annoyed the crowd. "Stop prating, ye wretched women," called out one man; but both ladies were from Syracuse, and Syracusan women had a habit of returning insult for insult. Gorgo looked icily at the offender. "Where does this clown come from?" she asked her friend contemptuously, and would have said more had not the Argive singing-woman begun her hymn to the living Adonis. Little wonder that Philadelphus was vain, if the singer's words represented public opinion: never was sweeter flattery addressed to living mortal. "And all deserved," thought the simple Gorgo. "Ah, how many good works have been done by you, King Ptolemy, since your father has been with the immortals," she sighed, and whispered to her friend: "The woman is exceedingly fortunate in enjoying so much knowledge: most fortunate further in that she sings so sweetly." The spectacle was over: but there was still something to



Attributed to Ptolemy Philadelphus
(Greco-Roman Museum, Alexandria)

see, and the two women failed to mark the passing hours. Suddenly Gorgo discovered that it was past dinner-time: suddenly there crossed her head the disturbing reflection that her husband was awaiting her return. "The man is vinegar all over," she remarked, straightening her veil, "quite disagreeable if he is hungry." As they turned to go, the two ladies moved their hands in the direction of the royal palace and cried: "Farewell, beloved Adonis."¹

It was the last of these costly shows in Arsinoë's time: she shared her father's contempt for ostentation and his belief also that revenue could be spent to better purpose than on vain parades and processions. Between brother and sister there had been a tussle on the point, but Arsinoë's will had prevailed, and Philadelphus had sulkily submitted. It was hard to convince him of the necessity of economizing expenditure: he thought his father's opinions old-fashioned, and took amiss his sister's pride in them. Popularity, in his view, should be the first objective of a king, pageantry and the composition of pleasing pageants a sovereign's first occupation. The festivals he had devised had been astounding triumphs: he had never felt himself more a king than when representing Adonis, and he believed Alexandria shared that opinion. But Arsinoë was immovable: the revenues of Egypt were not inexhaustible, the money spent upon a single pageant could suffice to double the army, quadruple the navy. More men and more ships were imperative if Egypt, now driven to discover new markets, extended her frontiers. The first Ptolemy had added Cyrene, Phoenicia, Coelesyria and the Cyclades to his dominion, and Arsinoë urged her brother to occupy the western shore of the Red Sea and penetrate the hinterland beyond. The campaign would destroy the control exercised by the Seleucid empire over trade with the East. Hitherto no power had challenged the monopoly: Indian caravans went to Damascus via Babylon and Arabian via Petra and Jerusalem. The provision of safe harbours on the Red Sea and of roads connecting the ports of discharge with the Nile might well persuade traders to prefer the cheap and quick sea route to the expensive and long caravan routes. Then Alexandria would displace Damascus as the distributing centre of Eastern merchandise, and the Egyptian treasury would profit handsomely from transit dues. The new revenue would maintain the squadrons and garrisons needed to hold the coastline, and economy in the royal expenditure meet the cost of developing the occupied territory. To explain to the East the advantages of sea-borne over land-borne transport, Philadelphus dispatched

¹ Theocritus, Idyll XV.

Dionysius on an adventurous mission. He was to make his way to the Black Sea, skirt its neighbour the Caspian, and, following in the footsteps of Alexander, reach the Indus. He was also to sound Indian princes on the possibility of selling to Egypt war-elephants. Egypt had none: yet Seleucus' triumph at Ipsus had sufficiently demonstrated the need of elephants to achieve victory in the field. Dionysius was unlikely to succeed in the quest: India still owed a vague allegiance to the Seleucids, and of all neighbours a Ptolemy was the least likely to obtain a favour at their hands.

Happily India was not the only available source, and exploring parties set out from Egypt to seek new hunting grounds. So while Ariston, the leader of one expedition, surveyed the Arabian coast, sailing down the Red Sea to the Straits of Bab-el-Mandeb, Satyrus, the leader of a second expedition, examined the African shore, selecting anchorages, dropping garrisons, founding new stations, examining existing and surveying new ports, and building substantial roads.¹ In later days the tired traveller stumbling across the uneven desert blessed Philadelphus for his forethought. One Sotericus, in charge of marbles and their transport from the hills beyond Coptos, was moved to record on stone his "thanks to Pan, keeper of the good road, and all other gods": a second, a certain Pergaius of Apollonius, also offered his thanks to the same god for "having been saved from the Troglodes." Thus Heropolis at the head of the Gulf of Suez became Arsinoë, the northerly harbour of the Red Sea: Cosseir, Myos, Hormuz, and the golden Berenice (Suakin), the more southerly anchorages. Between these latitudes lay a region vaguely called Troglodytica, inhabited by mysterious races spoken of as the Ichthyophagi, the fish-eaters; the Chelenuphagi, the turtle-eaters; the Rhizophagi, the root-eaters; the Spermiophagi, the seed-eaters; the Cynamologi, the milkers of bitches; the Elephantophagi, the elephant-eaters; and the Struthophagi, the bird-eaters,—and behind this inhospitable coast there roamed the wild beasts of the forest and marsh, the rhinoceros and the elephant, the lion and the leopard, the giraffe and the bison.² But the Troglodytica was suspicious, and in the end Philadelphus was forced to establish his own hunting ground at Ptolemais in latitude 17°.

Attracted by a prospect of equipping himself with elephants of the Seleucids, Philadelphus spoke vaingloriously of his intention

¹ W. W. Tarn, "Ptolemy II and Arabia," vol. xv, *Journal Egyptian Archeology*.

² Strabo, bk xvi.

to lead the army in person to the conquest of Ethiopia. It was empty talk, for when Philadelphus waged war, he did so vicariously. It is possible that he reached on this occasion the First Cataract; since he restored at Philae the temple of Isis: it is improbable that he went farther. Inhospitable Nubia offered little temptation to a king who throughout life preferred the palace to the camp, a bed to a bivouac. Philadelphus indeed was more interested in the organization than in the conduct of a campaign, and he devoted immense pains to the transfer of merchandise from the Red Sea to the Nile. It was a short but distressing march: a twelve days' journey across a desert barren of vegetation, rich only in minerals and precious stones. The road to Coptos served the gold and emerald mines and the porphyry quarries, but outside these scattered habitations of man the desert gave no sign of life. To support the caravans expected to cross and recross this treeless and waterless area, Philadelphus established four permanent camps, dug deep wells. With equal enthusiasm he applied himself to a second task: the engagement of new mercenaries for garrison duty on the Red Sea, and of shipwrights to build a second fleet. Volunteers came forward willingly enough. The king bore the reputation of being "the best of paymasters to a free man," and Theocritus' counsel to the young and stout-hearted "to be off to Egypt" was no doubt quite sincere. These and other serious interests transformed Philadelphus from an idle and vain prince into a hard and scheming ruler. It was a turning point of life: he put away frivolous pursuits, he devoted himself thenceforward to the proper business of a king, the care of the state.

The traverse of the desert roads was hardly completed when Philadelphus lost interest in their construction. It was at the best only the substitution of a shorter for a longer caravan route, and he had the wit to see that the trader in these circumstances would hesitate before abandoning a route that had served him well for centuries. His programme changed: still bent upon convincing the East of the advantages of Alexandria over Damascus as a distributing centre, Philadelphus thought of uniting the Mediterranean and Red Seas by means of the Nile. It was an astute but not an original idea. Seti of the nineteenth dynasty had possibly experimented with it,¹ Necho of the twenty-sixth dynasty and Darius the Persian without doubt had planned to unite the two seas by a canal

¹ Relief on the North Wall of the Great Hypostyle Hall of Karnak, where this Pharaoh on the banks of the frontier canal receives the congratulations of his subjects.

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that, issuing from a large lake fed by the Nile in the neighbourhood of Bubastis (the modern Zagazig), traversed the land of Goshen, and emptied itself at the ancient Patumos, built at the southern extremity of the Bitter Lakes. But neither Necho nor Darius completed their task. Warned by an oracle that he was working in the interest of the barbarians, the first timidly abandoned the execution: informed that the Red Sea level was higher than the land of Goshen, Darius stopped work, content to inform posterity of his intention. "I am Darius the Persian," says a stele set up on the line of the excavation. "I conquered Egypt, I ordered this canal to be dug. Then I cried: 'Go, destroy half of it': for such was my will." Oracles and warnings did not influence Philadelphus, and he began the task of re-excavating the bed of this freshwater canal. It was designed generously, wide enough to permit two triremes to sail abreast, deep enough to allow the passage of freight shipping, and navigable for two-thirds of the year by the aid of primitive locks, heavy wooden beams superimposed upon one another.¹

Philadelphus was now a victim to ambition: he coveted all Arabia, Syria, Asia Minor, and even Greece and Macedonia. The dream was not altogether fantastic. His troops occupied Phoenicia, Coelesyria and Palestine, his ships patrolled the Aegean and Red Seas; his sister-wife Arsinoë II was still mistress of Samothrace and Samos and the provinces of Lycia and Caria in Asia Minor, and lastly his neighbour Antiochus, son of Seleucus, was fully occupied in trying to drive across the Hellespont vast armies of Gauls. So Philadelphus pondered undisturbed his plans. Northern Sinai seemed a convenient point to begin his penetration, and into the country of the Nabataeans went a little expedition. It was a bloodless campaign. Making terms with the Nabataeans, the commander forced his way north, garrisoned Idumaea and Ammonitis, built Philadelphus (Rabbath Ammon), crept up to Damascus and reconnoitred the country lying between the Euphrates and the Tigris. But the expedition got no farther: realizing danger to his communications, Antiochus hurried to the relief, and the Egyptian prudently fell back. It is doubtful whether Philadelphus made the campaign, but he took the honours of it as if he had commanded in person, and permitted the priests of Pithom to record on a stele their humble thanks for restoring to their temple the images of Egyptian gods stolen by Cambyses. Yet if this hero, "skilful to wield a

¹ A. Wilson, *The Suez Canal*, ch. i. Oxford, 1933.

spear," did not share the hardships of the expedition, it must be confessed that his naval strategy was admirable. It was his demonstrations off the coast of Asia Minor and his operations in Palestine that drove Antiochus into asking for terms. Out of the peace that followed (271 B.C.) Philadelphus did very well. Gossip may have magnified the achievement and Theocritus have blushed perhaps when he wrote: "All the sea and the land of the rushing rivers are ruled over by Ptolemy;"¹ still, the coastline of southwest Asia Minor seems to have passed to Egypt.

¹ Theocritus, Idyll XVII.

CHAPTER IV

PTOLEMY PHILADELPHUS

(continued)

BOTH parties welcomed an armistice, though Asia Minor paid heavily for the fact. Egyptian administration was less gentle than that of the Seleucid, and taxation greater: between the tribute claimed by Philadelphus and the maintenance of the Egyptian garrison, occupied territory in Asia had reason to regret the change of masters. The last vestiges of autonomy vanished: from Alexandria the king controlled every petty item of domestic administration. Desirous of building a new gymnasium, Halicarnassus had first to obtain the royal permission; deeming it imperative to control the export of wheat, Samothrace had first to persuade Philadelphus of the necessity. It was usually a costly business: the throne had to be propitiated by presents of golden crowns and the court by bribes before requests of this type were granted.

Philadelphus needed breathing-time to develop the productivity of Egypt. His revenue, estimated at 14,000 talents, or perhaps £3,000,000, and 150 million artabas of wheat, was handsome enough as revenue went in those days: but his expenditure was also rising by leaps and bounds. The occupation of the Red Sea, the campaigns in Syria and Asia Minor, the development of Alexandria, the maintenance of an extravagant court and expensive administration, and the patronage of writers and philosophers, made a hole in the royal purse, and Arsinoë, the sister-wife, counselled her brother to prune expenditure. Economies were possible and obvious: a reduction in the size of the court was one. An army of parasites and their families lived on the bounty of the palace: the number of king's kinsmen, the first and second royal friends, the senior bodyguard, the corps of pages, and the queen's household, were continually growing. All Macedonians, and not a few Egyptians of a certain station in life, thought themselves and their children entitled to be enrolled in one or another of these groups. The administration, staffed with Greeks, who tricked the state and defrauded the peasantry indiscriminately, needed similar treatment. At its head was the dioecetes (high treasurer) and keeper of the Great Seal, two Pharaonic offices, held by one Greek

or another since the days of Cleomenes, Alexander's financial representative. It was intelligible enough for a Ptolemy to continue the practice, but less reasonable to make of it an excuse to hellenize the government from top to bottom. Very likely Ptolemy Soter, preoccupied with war, was not aware of the development: it would have been more in keeping with his policy to reserve only important offices for Greeks, and to staff the lower ranks with Egyptians. No doubt Cleomenes and his successors could urge that so long as Greek was the official language their subordinates must be Greek-speaking, and the excuse was substantial enough. The court spoke Greek, the treasury kept its accounts in Greek; the merchant conducted his business and registered his contracts in Greek, and the Egyptian appended to his petition a Greek translation of the vernacular. Philadelphus could not contest the argument, and in this vicious circle the administration stumbled and floundered.

In despair Philadelphus turned to the development of existing sources of revenue.¹ Agricultural taxation was already heavy, but Apollonius, the dioecetes of the day, did not doubt that the soil could bear a greater burden. Large and infertile areas were awaiting reclamation, and speculative capitalists needed only encouragement to farm on a large scale. In theory all land was the property of the Crown: in practice the Crown itself farmed only the royal domain, cultivated by a royal and privileged tenantry, and leased the remaining land to private individuals on payment of rent paid partly in kind, partly in money. Rents varied according to the productivity of the land, dependent in turn upon the annual inundation. The classification of each irrigable basin or area was precise. Land habitually or customarily flooded formed the two first classes, below were fields on the edge of the summer flood, and lastly land too salty to produce payable crops. But capital and industry can produce miracles in Egyptian agriculture, and Apollonius, the dioecetes, convinced his master that better drainage and more scientific canalization would bring land now marsh and desert under cultivation. There was no need to search for the capitalist or the colonist. Alexandria abounded with wealthy merchants on the look-out for remunerative investments, the army had numbers of elderly mercenaries clamouring for their discharge. The ex-soldier's value as a colonist was a little doubtful: none the less, his transfer from the army to the land would advantage the state in that it provided at no cost to the treasury a trained reserve

¹ Sherman Wallace, *Taxation in Egypt*, Oxford, 1938.

and incidentally kept the mercenary tied to Egypt. It was in Apollonius' mind to offer to the capitalists undeveloped areas up to 10,000 arourae, to provide the discharged mercenary with holdings varying from ten to a hundred arourae.¹ The state exacted no contribution towards the cost of irrigation, and even undertook to construct all canals and drains: on the other hand, it expected the owner to put money and labour into the betterment of the property. To persuade the more timid investor to venture his savings, Apollonius himself took up in the Moeris nome (the modern Fayum) the first grant, or dorea, an extensive tract of undeveloped land three miles square.

It was a speculation, no doubt, but the capitalist presently obtained a handsome return on his money. Apollonius, a pertinacious Greek, made his own venture in the vicinity of Philadelphia, the new capital of the nome, pay well. His ships carried beans and onions to Phoenicia and Asia Minor, loaded up at Smyrna with oil and wine, and sold their cargoes in Alexandria advantageously. No doubt Apollonius had an excellent head for business: he discovered new markets, he contrived to secure a monopoly of several remunerative trades. The discretion and honesty of this dioecetes Philadelphus had never questioned, and certainly Apollonius seems to have devoted no less attention to the interests of the state than he paid to his own. His jurisdiction was extensive: he confiscated the property of dishonest and incompetent officials, he executed offenders convicted of cheating the state, and punished rogues of lawyers who rashly undertook their defence. It was useless to appeal against his decisions. The king would not listen, and the victim achieved nothing for his pains. "Send him under escort to us," wrote Philadelphus irritably on one occasion, "and do you seize his property."² But if Apollonius conducted his administration of the nome with a high hand, he also watched closely the interests of the farmer. Under the direction of a skilful Greek, Cleon by name, the Moeris nome was studded with drains and canals. Contractors carried out the projects, villages along the lines of excavation provided the labour. Cultivation in the nome, a deep limestone depression covered with deposits of Nile mud, began to pay at once, thanks partly to Cleon's canalization, but also to Apollonius' insistence upon scientific farming, and to avaried rotation of crops. In addition to barley

¹ An aroura equalled approximately three-fifths of an acre.

² Schubart, *Ein Jahr tausend am Nil*. Berlin, 1918.

and Indian corn, capitalists and colonists were encouraged to produce better payable crops such as olive and castor oils, fruit-trees and vines, to raise superior livestock, to experiment with bee-keeping. Apollonius took pains to procure seeds and plants unknown in Egypt, to import bulls, boars, and rams to improve the breed of indigenous stock. His energy was immense: he was perpetually racing up and down the Nile, paying flying visits to Palestine and the Greek islands, inspecting his numerous agencies, encouraging competent, censuring incompetent, subordinates.

He passed for a religious man, as well he might, if the endowment of temples and shrines is testimony to a man's piety. For Isis he had a particular regard: wherever he happened to be, he supported the cost of celebrating the goddess's particular festival. That duty was perhaps expected from a man of his station and wealth, and no doubt between private trading and official duties, Apollonius was a well-to-do man. The office of dioecetes presumably was a lucrative appointment, if not in salary at least in perquisites, and highly-placed personalities thought it worth while to enlist Apollonius' patronage. Tobias, the hereditary chief of Transjordan, was one, and when despatching to Alexandria his tribute, he invariably begged the dioecetes to accept a small present as testimony of his regard. On one occasion it was a gift of handsome black slaves, on another an offering of myrrh and spice. Humbler folk sent consignments of pear-shoots, specimens of rare breeds of sheep and cattle, in the hope of finding favour. No doubt an establishment of the size and state maintained by Apollonius needed a large income. Within his palace under a controller of the household were masters of ceremonies, grooms of the chambers, masters of horse, chief stewards, food and wine tasters, private physicians, harpists, flutists, dancers, singers, and a multitude of indoor and outdoor servants, both freed men and slaves: lodged outside were the managers, with their secretaries, copyists and accountants, of the shipping, trading, and agricultural agencies promoted by him. To feed this army of dependants needed forethought, and the controller was often at his wit's ends to do so. Supplies came from the provinces, and Apollonius' agent was none too punctual in forwarding them.

Into the confused financial administration of the first Ptolemy Apollonius at least introduced order. In Alexandria sat his two principal lieutenants, the chief accountant and the head of the administrative service, each trusting for eyes and ears to a numerous body of provincial inspectors. The nome was one replica of the

Alexandria establishment, the village another. Collection of revenue in the nome was in the hands of an antigraphews, or secretary-general, assisted by oeconomes and subordinates, who supervised the village scribes, sitologes or store officers who accepted payments in kind, and trapezites, or receivers who accepted payments in coin. Then difficulties concerning the currency arose that the administration had not foreseen. Gold in bulk ran short: what quantities existed in Egypt outside temple treasure were in the hands of traders, and the latter were reluctant to exchange metal for local coin that might depreciate. There was also this further embarrassment: despite the urgent entreaty of Demetrius, in charge of the royal mint, Apollonius obstinately declined to set up an assay office, and without that office Demetrius had no means of testing the purity of any gold offered him.¹ Thus the provinces continued to reckon in copper, and the copper drachma, varying in value from 1/120 to 1/300 of its silver counterpart, to remain the unit of account. To collect tolls in coin, there arose thus the need first of currency specialists and next of banks, keeping not only accounts of the state but also those of private clients. The complication was too great for the provincial official, and so came about in course of time the practice of farming out the taxes. It was a highly organized business, typical of Egyptian administration in Ptolemaic times. The state sold the farmership, a royal commission superintended the auctions. A successful bidder had to produce substantial guarantors, and recoup himself by a percentage of the sums he collected. The return varied from five to ten per cent.: a poor recompense for the labour the office entailed. Moreover, looking upon the tax-farmer perhaps not unreasonably as a potential thief, the state harried him unmercifully. A crowd of inspectors and scribes dogged his footsteps and sharp punishments followed any departure from the procedure laid down by the treasury. A fine of the amount at issue multiplied by fifty for example, followed failure to report to provincial headquarters payment of a tax.

Owner in theory of all the soil, in practice the king did not press the claim farther than his right to a share of the produce. The levy varied, depending upon the estimated expenditure of the state in the following year: cold comfort perhaps to the tenant, inasmuch as expenditure always seemed to increase, and never decrease. Moreover, the treasury contributed little to the betterment of agriculture beyond tracing new drains and canals, and

¹ Zenon Papyrus, No. 59,021, Cairo Museum.

supervising the clearance from silt of existing ones, and even then the village paid the bill by providing the labour. They would have borne the burden with more equanimity but for their subjection to a host of other vexatious and more petty taxes. No fresh source of revenue escaped Apollonius' eagle eye. The cultivator had to pay the state for licence to store his own corn, to cut his own brushwood, and the herdsman to pasture his cattle, the shepherd to feed his flock. Trades and crafts suffered analogous disabilities. To practise any occupation, it was first necessary to purchase a permit, and the barber, weaver, dyer, tailor, shoemaker, dispenser, silversmith, donkey-boy, porter, innkeeper, and boatman all paid heavily for the privilege of following their calling.¹ Nor was this all: the movements of every individual were recorded, his profits scrutinized: without permission of the state he could neither leave his village nor relinquish his vocation. Provincial Egypt, in short, had become the victim of a bureaucracy the like of which the world has never surpassed.²

Adroitly the state created a network of monopolies, exploiting mines and fisheries, the wine and oil, the weaving and brewing trades, the manufacture of papyrus and cloth, the purchase and sale of perfumes and cosmetics. There was always a demand for precious metals and stones: gold from Nubia and Ethiopia, pearls from the Persian Gulf, rubies, topazes, emeralds and amethysts from the Red Sea borderland, and for building material the granite, basalt and alabaster of Upper Egypt, all bought in the cheapest and sold in the dearest market. Perfumes were also a close monopoly. No citizen of Egypt, irrespective of age, sex or race, could manage without a supply of pomades and scents, nor could the embalming trade live without myrrh, the indigenous perfume of Arabia. No doubt, in the instance of certain commodities the treasury found it convenient to put up to sale a particular monopoly. That of the fisheries was an example: the highest bidder secured the rights of a province, paid over to the state 25 per cent. of the daily catch, salted down the balance, and dispatched it by river in state boats to Alexandria. Alcohol was another example. Any respectable person apparently could brew and sell to the public a beer made of fermented barley, the national beverage: but the treasury controlled output, less perhaps in the

¹ U. Wilcken, *Griechische Ostraka*, Leipzig, 1899.

² Apollonius' private registration offices in the Fayum needed sixty rolls of papyrus every ten days. G. Glotz, *Bulletin Société Royale d'Archéologie d'Alexandrie*, No. 25.

interest of sobriety than in the intention of sharing the profits. The wine monopoly was a more complicated procedure. In Pharaonic Egypt it was a perquisite of the local temple, which sold the right of grape-cultivation in return for one-sixth of the produce, or apomoira, the traditional pin-money of the queens of Egypt. Now the tax-farmer stepped in, inspecting the harvest, supervising the pressing, recording the quantity of wine produced, and finally selling it at public auction. Oil also was more or less a royal monopoly. Production was free, but manufacture the privilege of the treasury. The administration fixed the areas whereon its cultivation was permitted, paid bare wages to the labour employed, and credited the tax-farmer with the proceeds of sales. Neither the wine nor the oil was particularly good, and customers who imported better quality had to pay a stiff price for the fancy. Heavy customs dues discouraged importation of most articles; for free trade had no place in Philadelphus' administration.

Absorbed in these experiments, he did not notice his sister's failing health. She had been ailing for some months, and in 270-269 B.C. she died, worn out in body and in spirit. History has dealt severely with this sister-queen, recording her sins and oblivious to her virtues. Her heart was hard, no doubt, her nature pitiless, and men or women who blocked her path suffered for the temerity. Yet in these respects she was no more than a woman of her day, and posterity should judge Arsinoë from that angle. At least she was a loyal wife and a devoted mother, and in return husband, son and brother respected and admired her. In the interest of Lysimachus' child her son Ptolemy, who narrowly escaped death at the hands of his uncle Ceraunus in Cassandria, she laboured incessantly. He was heir to his father's throne of Macedonia; but first Ceraunus and then Antigonus barred the way, and Philadelphus would not interfere. Her policy, no doubt, was always selfish: dominating it was a passionate desire to rule—alone if possible; if not, then as the power behind the throne. Yet her influence over Philadelphus in the first years of marriage had been profound. She awoke in him ambition, she stirred in him a conscience, until finally the brother-husband put away childish conceits. He recognized the debt and heaped honours upon his sister. In her lifetime he had instituted a private cult in honour of the queen, associating himself with her under the title of the Brother and Sister Gods, the *Theoi Philadelphoi*: at her death, he proclaimed the cult a national institution, appointed a special priestess, and formally identified Arsinoë with Aphrodite. Thenceforth

to Arsinoë-Aphrodite and to the Brother and Sister Gods the Greek in Egypt paid homage. Callicrates of Samos, admiral of the Egyptian fleet, set up in Olympia two statues in honour of the new goddess, raised at Canopus to her memory the temple Zephyris. Everywhere her memory was revered. Athens placed her statue in the Odeum, and a second in the groves of Helicon. In Egypt corporations and guilds raised shrines, and priests cut inscriptions on their temple walls, to record the virtues of the departed saint. "Our queen is gone," the people cried, and indeed Egypt was profoundly moved by her death. To commemorate his sister's memory, Philadelphus also endowed her cult with the tax of one-sixth of the proceeds of vine cultivation, and changed the name of the nome Moeris (Fayum) to Arsinoïtes, and desired the state architect to erect a chapel that would rival in splendour the Sema or burial place of Alexander the Great. It was a command that delighted the elderly but still versatile Dinocrates, since he had an idea that would astonish the whole world. It was certainly an original conception. Above an iron image of Arsinoë he proposed to place a roof of lodestar, powerful enough to lift the statue from the ground, and so delude the visitor into the belief that the deified queen hung between heaven and earth.¹ But Dinocrates' calculations had gone astray, and he was pondering still over them when death overtook him. Satyrus, his pupil and successor, a more prosaic artist, did not pursue the master's idea: in place he set up before the Arsinoëum shrine a lofty obelisk that Nectanebo, the last Pharaoh of Egypt, had ordered to be cut to commemorate his own memory.

A Macedonian widower on the right side of forty seldom remained disconsolate for ever, and Philadelphus' interest in women soon revived. Within a year he had found a companion, Bilistiche by name, an athletic young lady who conferred and won prizes in the Olympic games; who wore diaphanous robes lest the public should fail to mark the beauty of her limbs. There was no need for Arsinoë's partisans to take offence: irregular unions had become a commonplace in Alexandria, and even the sober Ptolemy Soter had felt no shame in maintaining a household of favourite ladies. Elderly and censorious women might sniff at these hetaeras, but the Lais and Phrynes of the past were great ladies in their way, and Alexandria, a city of romance, was now imitating Corinth. Bilistiche was hardly an Aspasia, and certainly her rivals and successors did not model themselves upon Pericles'

¹ Pliny, *Natural History*, bk. 34, ch. 42; Pausanias, v. 8. 11.

famous mistress. Philadelphus' taste in women, in short, steadily deteriorated; with advancing age he seemed to choose his companions without discretion, mostly common women and slaves, such as Mnesis and Pothina, a couple of flutists, and Myrtium, a singer. There were also Didyma,¹ a buxom Egyptian girl, and perhaps the best-loved of the company, Clino, who loved to pose as a new Arsinoë. That was beyond her power, and Alexandria laughed heartily when this common little cupbearer walked abroad, crowned with the double horn of abundance, the emblem of the sister-wife-queen. Yet Philadelphus was neither a prisoner of these women, nor the victim now of his youthful hallucination that to please and be pleased is the only occupation of a ruler. Women were only a distraction, and the affairs of the state the business of his life.

It was indeed a time when Egypt needed a cool hand at the helm. Magas, viceroy of Cyrene, was talking and acting as if he were an independent sovereign. Antiochus, son of Seleucus, was preparing to retake possession of Cilicia and Phoenicia, Chremonides in Athens was inviting his fellow-citizens to throw off the yoke of Macedonia. Chremonides' declaration that Philadelphus, "following the example of his ancestors and the intentions of his sister, is ready to show zeal for the common liberty of the Hellenes"² heartened the Greeks and discouraged their enemy. It disconcerted Philadelphus also, since he had not intended to go beyond extending his sympathy to the first. But his hand was forced and Chremonides would not leave him alone until an Egyptian squadron sailed for the Piræus. It arrived too late: Athens was invested, and Patroclus, the admiral, dared not land his marines. In the end Athens capitulated, and Philadelphus' interest in its fate vanished. He was thinking then of Italy rather than of Greece. For a generation and more Rome had dominated Italy, until only the Gauls in the north and the Greek cities in the south disputed her supremacy. Tarentum was the first to provoke the inevitable struggle, and the Tarentines called upon Pyrrhus, King of Epirus, to come to their aid. Pyrrhus knew Egypt well: he had enjoyed her hospitality, had married a lady of Ptolemy's household, and been intimate with Ptolemy's son and heir Philadelphus. To Egypt, therefore, Pyrrhus confidently appealed for assistance. But it was not Egypt's quarrel and, counselled by Arsinoë,

¹ Athenæus, bk. xiii., ch. 37.

² Jouguet, *loc. cit.*, p. 219.

Philadelphus turned a deaf ear to Pyrrhus' hints of ships and money. Thus at the close of the campaign he was able to congratulate the Roman Senate upon their triumph with a clear conscience. A treaty of amity and peace between Rome and Egypt followed. An embassy went to Rome, and Rome returned the civility. War with Carthage was impending, and the Republic was glad to have one powerful friend in the Aegean. Philadelphus entertained the visitors hospitably, begged their acceptance of a handsome token of his regard. To his surprise the three Roman ambassadors politely but firmly declined the gifts, observing that for their pains they needed only the thanks of the Republic. The alliance lasted, and when Carthage solicited a temporary loan of 3,000 talents, Philadelphus regretted that Rome had the first claim upon his friendship. It was a good investment: a century later the Senate repaid the service by ordering Antiochus IV of Syria to choose between evacuating Egypt or going to war with the Roman people.

Throwing off the mask, Magas of Cyrene now took the field, vowing that he would dictate his own terms in the Egyptian capital. Philadelphus treated the boast contemptuously: he ridiculed Magas' threat, he spoke of him as a viceroy who needed a lesson in manners. They were rash words, for Magas, passing through Paraetonium (Mirsā Matru), was well on the way to Alexandria before Philadelphus realized his peril. But issue was never joined: hostile Beduins slipped between Cyrene and Paraetonium, and Magas, alarmed for his communications, turned back. Elated by this unexpected good fortune, Philadelphus himself advanced, until mutiny checked him in turn. It was an ugly business: one wing of the Egyptian army consisted of Galatians or Gauls, fierce but undisciplined mercenaries who refused to march a step further unless handsomely rewarded. Philadelphus acted with decision. He first halted and parleyed with the mutineers; then, discovering his words made no appeal, he feigned to capitulate and ordered a general retirement. It was a trap into which the Galatians fell. Philadelphus contrived to shepherd them on an island in Lake Mareotis, and there left them to perish of hunger.

Thus the campaign ended in stalemate: Magas went back to Cyrene, Philadelphus to Alexandria. But matters could not continue for ever in this way, and, crippled by age and illness, Magas bethought himself of a settlement: if his daughter Berenice married Philadelphus' son and heir Ptolemy, later known as Euergetes, the two fathers could compose their differences. Philadelphus was

as glad as Magas for a truce, for at that moment he was in need of husbanding his military resources. A formidable combination, Syria and Macedonia, were meditating his destruction. Each of the pair had a private grievance against Egypt. Antiochus II of Syria was the father-in-law of Magas; Antigonus Gonatas of Macedonia had not pardoned Philadelphus' intervention in Greece. The campaign dragged on for five or six years, success inclining now to one, now to another side, until the day went against Philadelphus. A naval engagement off Cos in 258 B.C. left Antigonus master of the Aegean and in possession of the Cyclades. The armistice that followed was short-lived. Taking advantage of the respite, Philadelphus equipped a second fleet, and recovered the islands. But no alliance between Macedonia and Syria was likely to last long. Nor did it do so in this instance, and, profiting by a lull in the fighting, Philadelphus opened fresh negotiations with Antiochus. The latter was very willing to listen, for, despite his successes in Asia Minor, he was now in dire straits. The Seleucid empire had been disintegrating for some years past. East of the Tigris its sovereignty had long since vanished, west of that river its supremacy was being hotly challenged. On Macedonian friendship Antiochus set no store: the interests of the two Powers were always antagonistic, and each harboured suspicions of the other. Thus Philadelphus had no great difficulty in persuading Antiochus that Egypt was a more natural ally, that marriage with an Egyptian princess would cement the partnership. One obstacle alone existed to the match: Antiochus, the prospective bridegroom, had already a wife and a son and heir. But that complication, common enough at this period, was no objection in the eyes of Philadelphus, nor did it count with Berenice, his daughter. She was over thirty, and unless a husband presented himself quickly she seemed likely to die a single woman. Indeed, of that misfortune she was within an ace, for Laodice, Antiochus' wife, a most obstinate lady, refused to allow herself to be divorced. Philadelphus was genuinely surprised. That a woman should stand in her husband's way was hardly decent in Macedonian eyes, and, dismissing the rumour as incredible, Philadelphus ordered his daughter to get ready to start. Meanwhile the bridegroom-elect was trying to overcome his wife's scruples. It was an arduous task: neither argument nor bribe would change Laodice's determination to remain in Antioch. There was nothing for it therefore but to use force, and so in 253-252 B.C. Laodice, with her children, was deported to Ephesus. There she brooded over revenge,

solaced perhaps by the reflection that being the richest woman in Asia she would not lack suitors. Antiochus could afford to be generous in the matter, seeing his Egyptian bride was bringing with her the revenues of Coelesyria as dowry. At Pelusium Berenice bade good-bye to her father and, under the escort of the useful Apollonius, continued the voyage. "When I was writing, we were approaching Sidon, accompanying the queen as far as the border," wrote Artemidorus, the high steward of Apollonius, to his friend Zenon in Egypt.¹

Despite other cares, Philadelphus found leisure to encourage scholarship. His interest in all that pertained to learning was as catholic as that of his father. Like him, no doubt, he had frequently to put up with second-rate men of letters. Other sovereign states, Macedonia, Syria, and Pergamum, were bent on the same quest, and poets, philosophers, and physicists of established reputation could now pick and choose. Many fought shy of Alexandria. Philadelphus was a liberal paymaster, but he expected poets perpetually to exalt his virtues, and historians perpetually to praise his prowess, and not every poet or historian was prepared to pay the price. To overcome their reluctance, he conceived the idea of forming a library comprehensive enough to attract even the greatest scholars. His father had toyed with the idea, and Demetrius of Phalerum had bought on his account many manuscripts. But unhoused, unexamined and unclassified, these literary treasures did not attract the student, and thus Philadelphus was led to create in the Bruchium quarter one library known as the Great Library, a second in the Rhacotis quarter known as the Daughter Library, and to commission Zenodotus to examine and catalogue the manuscripts. He was not the first ruler of Egypt to establish and maintain a royal library. Rameses II, the illustrious Pharaoh of the Nineteenth Dynasty, presumably maintained a private library, since an inscription at Gebel Silsila states of this Pharaoh: "I know what is written in the book-store kept in the Library."² Philadelphus' creation was a more noble conception in that it placed the manuscripts at the service of all who cared to examine them.

Nor was he to blame if the Mouseion and the Library did not

¹ Letter from Artemidorus, steward of Apollonius: Zenon Papyri, No. 29,251, Cairo Museum.

² *Records of the Past*, vol. x., p. 42, translation of an inscription of Rameses II at Gebel Silsila. See also the great Harris papyrus, *Records of the Past*, vol. viii.

permanently enrich the world of scholarship, if Alexandrian poetry was parasitic, philosophy decadent, and history uninspiring. The misfortune sprang from a vicious environment. The Mouseion was a close corporation: preoccupied with form and style, it produced no great prose-writer, no great poet. Theocritus and Callimachus may be excepted from that general indictment, but their contemporaries and successors, seeking new forms to express old ideas, lost in the process freshness and sincerity. Erudition was their ruin: strive as he would, the Alexandrian poet could not free himself from bondage to the past. None the less Alexandrian scholarship profited the world of learning, since it perfected the technique of versification, improved that of history, and revived interest in the masterpieces of literature. Nothing of this would have been possible without Philadelphus' enthusiasm, nothing of it without his inexhaustible purse. The whisper got abroad that every manuscript would find a purchaser in Alexandria, and to that market the Greek bookseller from Athens to Babylon hastened to depatch his treasures. Now and again a bargain would escape the eye of Zenodotus, the first librarian, now and again the library would have to put up with a defective copy. But accidents did not damp Zenodotus' ardour: if originals were unobtainable, then copies, good or bad, must serve. The library, in short, was an inspiration that benefited posterity. In it the critical scholar was able to eliminate from the text the errors and emendations of earlier copyists and ignorant students, and its defect lay in the encouragement of plagiarism, that perverse consequence of industrious reading. Plagiarism became very prevalent, and no sense of shame prevented the aspiring philosopher or poet appropriating the ideas and metres of the dead, and delivering them as his own work. Exposure did not abash the culprit and so low did literary morality in Alexandria fall that the critic of new works thought the crime pardonable. There were occasions, no doubt, when one or other of the judges would protest against the practice, as the youthful Aristophanes dared to do on the occasion of a competition in the theatre for the best ode in honour of Dionysus. His election as a judge had come about by an accident: one member of the tribunal was absent, and the impatient audience invited Aristophanes to fill the vacancy. The poets read their odes, and the listeners applauded generously until the turn of the last on the list came. It was not to the taste of the audience: listeners rose angrily from their benches, and hissed the unfortunate fellow off the platform. Then to the general astonishment Aristophanes was observed

to applaud enthusiastically. Called upon for explanation, he had the courage to cry: "I agree that the verse is detestable and the thought contemptible: but both are original, whereas his fellows had taken their ideas and metres from the Library."

The task before Zenodotus was formidable: from first to last he must have examined half a million manuscripts, retaining originals for the Great Library, allocating the best copies to the Daughter Library, and finally have found scholars sufficiently proficient in Greek to translate works written in Egyptian, Persian and Hebrew. The rolls were first roughly classified as *volumina simplicia et digesta*, about 90,000 in number, either original manuscripts or the manuscripts of a single work by a single author, and as *volumina commixta*, about 400,000 rolls, either copies or manuscripts comprising more than one composition by more than one author. Simultaneously Zenodotus was collating poetical works, Lycophron of Euboea and Alexander of Aetolus dramatic compositions. All three were distinguished critics and writers, each was a member of the Pleiades or seven literary stars of Alexandria. Zenodotus was an authority upon Homeric texts, eliminating pointless repetitions, elucidating involved passages. He had his detractors: colleagues who thought any comment upon Homer was an impertinence. Timon the philosopher was of their number: asked to name the best text of Homer in the Great Library, he answered shortly: "That which has been the least altered." At Zenodotus' elbow sat Callimachus of Cyrene, the poet, cataloguing uncritically but methodically every manuscript. He had been a lucky discovery: penniless and friendless, keeping body and soul together by teaching children in a little school of Eleusis, a suburb of Alexandria, and there Zenodotus found him. He divided his catalogue into half a dozen divisions, an arrangement that permitted the student to find easily the works of the writer he sought: he gave below the name an account of the author's education and a calculation of the length in lines of the works in question.

Of the many scholars who enjoyed Philadelphus' patronage, only a few have escaped oblivion. Theocritus and Callimachus the poets; Manetho, Callisthenes, and Petosiris the historians; Colotes and Menedemus the philosophers; Ctesibus and Strabo the physicists; Aratus, Aristarchus and Antilles the astronomers; Heron and Philon the master mechanics—a meagre roll even if to it were added the physician Apollodorus, the artist Helena, the rhetorician Sosibius, and possibly the anonymous translators of the Old Testament. Dominating this elect company is Theocritus

of Syracuse, who came to Alexandria in 273 B.C. There he composed his Idylls, there he sang the praises of a primitive pastoral life, of Tityrus' love for Amaryllis, of Damoetas' friendship with Daphnis, of Battus' converse with Corydon, of Eunice's charms. He may have owed something to Philetas, but his verse is always fresh and original. "Never laid I claim to any muse but my own,"¹ he said, and said truly, for he created the form of bucolic poetry that Vergil copied but hardly surpassed. There is indeed a touch of genius about Theocritus' verse that no imitator has rivalled: an absence of affectation, an insistence upon liberty to employ the dialect and metre that suited his fancy, a lively humour and a profound sympathy with human frailty. Next in order is Callimachus of Cyrene, less original, less imaginative, yet chosen by Ovid and Catullus to be their model. His relations with Theocritus are obscure. "If Theocritus with finely darkening cheeks hates me, four times as much may'st thou hate him: or if he loves me, love," was the theme of one epigram of his.² But the two seemed often to think alike: each believed that "a long work is a great evil," each thought the day of the interminable mythological epic was over, and each was a prolific writer, composing hymns, elegiacs, epigrams and essays with astounding facility. Part of Callimachus' poetry has lived, but his prose has perished. Of his catalogue, a veritable encyclopaedia of Greek literary history, nothing remains; and the same misfortune has overtaken his description of the Mouseion. His vanity approached his learning: but if he pretended to enjoy omniscience and a monopoly of knowledge, he was at least a supreme master of the epigram. His views on the proper length of a poem caused commotion among contemporaries accustomed to judge work by quantity rather than by quality, and Apollonius of Rhodes the author of a prodigious epic *The Argonauts*, fell under the lash of Callimachus' tongue. The victim struck back. "Blockhead, Old Bogy, Housewife's Slush, that's what I call Callimachus."³ It was an unedifying quarrel. Callimachus retorted by writing his poem "Ibis," likening his enemy to that unclean bird, and presently the entire Mouseion joined in the exchange of epigrams and lampoons, of charges and counter-charges. So the duel went on until Apollonius sulkily withdrew to Rhodes. The squabble

¹ Theocritus, Epigram XXIII.

² Callimachus, Epigram LIII.

³ F. A. Wright, *Poets of Greek Anthology*, Routledge, London.

amused Alexandria, always a little scornful of the poets and critics who frequented the Mouseion. Their airs and affectations provoked contempt, and the satirist was witty at their expense. Timon of Phlius likened the Mouseion to a casket and its inmates to chattering poultry.

"Egypt has its mad recluses,
Book-bewildered anchorites;
In the hencoop of the Muses
Keeping up their endless fights."¹

Of the historians Manetho and Petosiris, the first, a high priest of Sebenytus, was certainly Egyptian, the second possibly too. Their acquaintance with Greek and their knowledge of hieroglyphics was intimate. To Manetho archaeology owes a great debt, for upon his division of ancient Egyptian history into dynasties the student still loyally depends. His history is known only through the works of others, but Josephus borrowed largely from him, and the early Christian Fathers based their chronology upon Manetho's tables. His study did not end at history: he had a taste for poetry and an inclination also for astrology. Thus he dedicated to Philadelphus a dissertation in hexameters upon the celestial bodies, professing that a certain conjunction of them had foretold the future greatness of the king. Petosiris, on the other hand, seems to have been a better astronomer than historian. Of his works nothing survives, but Pliny thought well enough of it to quote Petosiris' estimate of the distance of the sun from the planets. Aratus of Soli in Cilicia enjoyed a well-earned reputation for versatility.² No branch of knowledge came amiss to him: he was a mathematician, an astronomer and an astrologer. It was his ambition to explain in verse for the benefit of the ignorant the mystery of the heavens, to describe the greater planets and constellations, to name the groups of stars clustered round each. As poetry his *Phaenomena* was poor: as a scientific work it contrived to live, and St. Paul, standing on the Hill of Mars, quoted a line from it to his Athenian audience two centuries later.³ Aristarchus of Samos possessed a more original genius. He was the first to divine the solar system, to declare that the earth moved round the sun, and thus anticipated Copernicus' discovery. But his inferences were in advance of his age, and he never succeeded in

¹ Athenaeus, *Epit.*, bk. i., 41.

² It is uncertain whether Aratus studied or not in Alexandria. His best work was done more probably in Macedonia.

³ Acts, xvii. 28; *Arat. Phaen.* 5.

convincing contemporaries that the earth in its yearly path bears no more proportion to the universe of the stars than the most insignificant point in a circle bears to that wider circumference. Of his writings only a treatise upon the magnitudes and distances of the sun and moon has come down to posterity: calculations geometrically correct, yet incomplete from lack of observation and instruments. He lived and died a disappointed man, for Alexandria scoffed at his knowledge and discredited his theories. Yet astrology, that favourite pursuit of ancient Egypt, presumably profited from Aristarchus' learning, and Philadelphus encouraged youthful mathematicians to become his pupils. Egypt was certainly an ideal locality for observation and study: the climate favoured the first, the Great Library aided the second. Among other students to take advantage of the king's invitation were Timochares and Aristillus. The first catalogued the fixed stars, and calculated their position: the second assisted his friend by taking observations.

But informing and wholesome literature was not the only output of the Mouseion. An obscene wit too often characterized incursions into mythology: the court encouraged the tendency, laughed at Timon's sallies, sniggered over Sotades' coarse quips. But Sotades went too far: he made Philadelphus his target, he ridiculed the virtue of a ruler who commits incest and raises temples in honour of his mistresses. It was the end of Sotades: Patroclus the admiral, taking a hint, drowned the offender. More agreeable reading was the rambling treatise of Apollodorus Gelius, the court physician, who professed to be a judge of good wine. Local wines the doctor could not recommend, since they destroyed the digestion, and ruined the palate: so Apollodorus counselled the king to drink only wine produced in the Greek islands and on the southern shores of the Black Sea.

Of philosophy, history and art in the reign of Philadelphus, and even more so under his successors, there is less to say. The two first needed more liberty of expression than a Ptolemy was prepared to allow: the third was slowly but surely degenerating under Egyptian influence. The philosophy of Plato and Aristotle had given way to that of Epicurus, and of that as taught and practised in Athens little in Alexandria of its original virtue survived: Calotes, a pupil, had contrived to transform his master's professions into a doctrine of unvarnished sensuality, and Alexandria wholeheartedly approved of the interpretation. Sculpture was no better off. The practice favoured in ancient Egypt of drawing the human figure mathematically by means of squares was

inconsonant with Greek procedure and, unlike the architect, the Alexandrian sculptor rashly tried to combine the two ideals. The experiment was a melancholy failure that succeeded only in producing a bastard style, as two statues of a Macedonian king (perhaps Alexander, son of Roxane, the Persian wife of Alexander the Great) and of a Greek notable of Naucratis, both in the Cairo Museum of Antiquities, indicate. Enough has been said to indicate the virtues and deficiencies of the Mouseion, and of this temple of the Muses it at least may be said that Philadelphus' pensioners contrived to keep Hellenic culture alive without as well as within Egypt. Neighbouring sovereigns followed the example of the Ptolemies, patronizing students and founding libraries in an ambition to encourage learning: while in Egypt scattered communities of Greek-speaking men, Macedonians, Peloponnesians, Cretans, Ionians, and others read and discussed the masterpieces of Attic literature with renewed zest. At Hibeh,¹ for example, there existed a little company who seem to have enjoyed not only the works of Homer, Sophocles, Euripides, Plato, in the original, but the speeches of forgotten orators and rhetoricians, and even listened with zest to the sayings of wise men dead and buried years before. The lamp of culture burnt steadily among these exiles.

The supreme literary glory of the period was a translation into Greek of the Hebrew Sacred Books commonly called the Septuagint, from the legendary number of the translators. The tradition that credits Philadelphus with the conception rests upon the testimony professing to be contemporary of Aristeas, a hellenized Jew, presumably attached to the royal palace, but close examination of Aristeas' letter suggests a doubt of his story. That the Septuagint was composed in Alexandria and was the work of several hands may be conceded, but beyond that admission all is obscure. Authority even differs upon the reign when the translation was made.² No doubt first Alexander and then Ptolemy Soter obliged or persuaded a number of Jews to settle in Egypt: equally it is clear that Philadelphus encouraged the practice. Thus a generation of Egyptianized Jews had grown up, who used Greek as their mother-tongue, who were unable to understand the Hebrew of

¹ Hibeh Papyrus, vol. i., *Classical Fragments*. Grenfell & Hunt, London, 1906.

² Notably the two great Jewish historians Schürer and Grätz. The first ascribes it to the reign of Philadelphus, the second to that of Philometor, sixth of the line.

their sacred books. It was a step to hellenization, and to the older Jew the tendency was anathema. If it is conceivable that their sons, clinging no less to their faith, clamoured for a Greek translation of the sacred books, it is also possible that the patriarchs themselves, thinking it perilous to antagonize the king, supported the appeal. Even the reflective Jew in Palestine may have welcomed their translation, for over his country hellenization was sweeping apace, a development largely due to Philadelphus' creation of new and rebuilding of ancient cities on the shores of Lake Galilee and on the southern borders of Syria. True or false, Aristeas' story bears repeating. At the request of the curious Philadelphus, this Alexandrian Jew journeyed to Jerusalem to get a copy of the holy books: he returned triumphantly with them and with seventy-two Jews "of the highest character, culture and parentage, masters of Hebrew and Greek" to officiate as translators. Alexandria received the distinguished visitors hopefully: Nicanor, the high steward, and Dositheus, the grand chamberlain, broke for once the rules that governed the etiquette of the court concerning a royal audience, and the king invited the strangers to sup with him that night. At the banquet he asked questions, approved of the answers, and, turning to Nicanor, said: "The virtue and wisdom of these men of Jerusalem astound me." For six nights the seventy-two dined at the royal table, slept in the palace: on the seventh day Dositheus led the guests to the island of Pharos, and bade them begin their labours. Such briefly is the testimony of Aristeas, abounding in improbabilities and inconsistencies, but a vivid and dramatic tale written presumably less in the aim of helping history than in a desire to glorify Jewry.¹

Whatever his defects and omissions, Philadelphus maintained throughout life an admiration for culture and an enthusiasm for the beautiful. Wherever he went he built temples, restored shrines: at Sebenytus (Miniet Samanud) he rebuilt Nectanebo's sanctuary, re-dedicating the shrine to the Isis of Hebet or Horus, at Naucratis he repaired the Hellenium, a temple common to the gods of all Greek-speaking people, at Tanis he designed a shrine and plastered its walls with steles representing the King and Queen of Egypt clothed in the garments of Greece, paying homage to Osiris, Isis and Horus. For Philae, the particular home of Isis, he had a specially tender regard, and to that goddess he consecrated a sanctuary embellished with an elegant gateway. Simultaneously he was raising in Alexandria temples and shrines

¹ Jewish Encyclopaedia, *Aristeas*.

to Egyptian or Greek gods, as the fancy took him, enlarging the royal palace, deepening the dockyard and improving the amenities of the town. His crowning achievement was the erecting of the famous beacon at the easterly extremity of the island of Pharos. It was also a triumph of engineering skill: an imposing structure of gleaming marble, five stories in height, of decreasing dimensions. The first and the two above were square, the fourth octagonal, the fifth circular. Set upon the roof were mirrors of metal so arranged as to reflect shipping invisible from the shore; on the roof there burnt at night a bright fire that comforted the navigator uncertain of his bearings. The sailor needed a hint, for the entrance to the eastern or Great Harbour was narrow, and the current about the mouth dangerous. Sostratus was the architect of Pharos, as the inscription recorded by Strabo, "Sostratus of Cnidus, son of Dexiphanes, to the gods preservers," implies.

His health became affected after the death of Arsinoë II, the sister-wife. He was perpetually ailing: at times he was perhaps even within measurable distance of death. On these occasions all Egypt joined in offering prayers for his recovery—testimony to the fact that his popularity persisted despite his many deficiencies. In turn he was in the habit of giving to some Egyptian divinity the credit of his recovery. One such votive inscription dedicated jointly to Chons, the Theban god of healing, and to the deified Arsinoë II is still extant, when Philadelphus acknowledges his thanks to "Chons, the great god, who drives away demons, who has saved His Majesty from the underworld."¹ But neither Chons nor any other Greek or Egyptian god could grant immortality, nor could Philadelphus' constitution, weakened by indulgence, resist the inroad of old age. Yet to the end in the eyes of his subjects Philadelphus remained a hero, half divine, half human, and Theocritus' farewell tribute—"Prince Ptolemy, of thee will I speak as of other demi-gods"²—presumably interpreted public opinion.

The end of the reign was approaching: Philadelphus' days on earth were numbered. His mind was still vigorous, his grasp on the helm of the state still firm, but dissipation and indulgence had left their mark upon his face and body. The yellow-haired stripling had become an ugly, bald-headed old man, unable to move without assistance. He was a martyr to gout, and the

¹ Daressy, *Recueil de Travaux*, xvi, 44.

² Idyll XVII.

victim of obesity. His complexion had turned a dull scarlet, his eyeballs protruded, his mouth dropped. He clung to life, praying for immortality, envying the healthy beggars snoring on the sea-shore. "O wretched king I am," he cried, "that I am not one of these men."¹ It was a melancholy ending.

¹ Athenæus, bk. xii., ch. 51.

CHAPTER V

PTOLEMY EUERGETES I

247—221 B.C.

PTOLEMY EUERGETES, elder son of Philadelphus and the first Arsinoë, succeeded: a handsome, debonair Macedonian despite his massive neck and mottled face. There was never a doubt of his accession. The father had repudiated the mother but not her children, and his sister-wife, the second Arsinoë, did not question their right to inherit. For the young this ambitious woman had a maternal regard. She had been a kind mother to her own children by Lysimachus, she was an equally good step-mother to the offspring of the first Arsinoë she had displaced. She watched over their health, she superintended their early education, and Euergetes later acknowledged the debt by styling himself "Son of Ptolemy and Queen Arsinoë, the Brother and Sister Gods." Her death was a misfortune for the family: Philadelphus left the children to the care of servants, and Euergetes did not pardon the neglect. He grew into a headstrong lad, contemptuous of his father's vices. But Alexandria sympathized with the boy, and Philadelphus, jealous of his popularity, sought an opportunity to eliminate his heir from the capital. It came with the death of Magas, ruler of Cyrenaica. A new viceroy was needed, and to Cyrene Euergetes went in 259-58 B.C. The nomination was legitimate enough. Philadelphus' campaign against Magas had ended in an understanding that Magas should remain viceroy during his life; that Berenice, Magas' only child, should marry Philadelphus' heir and so reunite Cyrenaica with Egypt. But no more than betrothal had taken place. The prospective bridegroom and bride were still children: Magas was doubtful of his subjects' approval and Philadelphus suspicious of his son's loyalty.

The delay nearly cost Egypt the loss of the province. Magas was hardly in his grave when Cyrenaica called upon Apamé, the widow, to denounce the pact, and the queen-mother sought another suitor for her daughter's hand. She appealed to Macedonia, and Antigonus Gonatas, the sovereign, very ready to oblige, dispatched

his good-looking half-brother Demetrius to Cyrene, capital of the Pentapolis. It was an unlucky choice. Within a few weeks Demetrius heartily wished himself back in Greece: he discovered that he had purchased a crown at too high a price. Cyrene was intolerably dull: a miserable exchange for Corinth and other gay cities of Greece. In place of agreeable mistresses and wits, Demetrius had to put up with the company of an insipid child and elderly philosophers. Seeking distraction, he turned a roving eye upon the other ladies of the court, and his glance fell on Apamé, still beautiful enough to excite admiration, still young enough to desire it. The intrigue became the gossip of the palace, and presently news was brought to Berenice that Demetrius was in her mother's apartments. She ran to the queen's bedchamber, broke open the door, and found the pair locked in one another's arms. The guards ran up, tore the seducer from his mistress's embrace, stabbed him to death and turned their swords upon the queen. In vain Berenice tried to save her mother. Her cry was unheard and, pierced by a dozen thrusts, Apamé fell lifeless across the body of her paramour. Alexandria wholeheartedly admired the spirit of its future queen. "A stout-hearted maid," sang Callimachus approvingly: "A splendid crime that won for you your prince."

Disturbed by the tragedy, Cyrenaica abandoned the idea of resisting union with Egypt: reluctantly it admitted that Berenice must marry Euergetes lest further misfortune befell the line of Magas. While debate on the point proceeded, Euergetes unexpectedly entered Cyrene, the capital, read his commission, promised autonomy to the province. It was welcome news, and Cyrene applauded loudly when the new viceroy, counting upon the understanding between his father and Magas, announced his intention to marry Berenice at once. He spoke too quickly: Philadelphus had changed his mind, and without his father's consent Euergetes dared not proceed. Moreover, Berenice hung back. Demetrius' perfidy had shaken her trust in men, and she would not tempt fortune a second time. Thus the match hung fire, and Euergetes posed as Berenice's consort without any marriage ceremony. The compromise worked well enough. Styling herself Queen of Cyrenaica, Berenice struck her own coins, and permitted Euergetes to govern in her name. The viceroy kept his word in the matter of autonomy: a *boulé* or senate and a *gerusiâ* or assembly transacted the domestic business of the province, and Cyrenaica enjoyed an unaccustomed period of tranquillity. But

viceregency in such conditions is an unsatisfying office, and Euergetes heartily rejoiced when Philadelphus' approaching end recalled him to Alexandria. Berenice followed, and the long betrothal came to a close. It was a happy marriage. Both had suffered from the sins of a parent, but both were young enough to bury and forget the past. Fortunately there was no need in the circumstances for a prolonged honeymoon, nor had Euergetes the leisure to spend on one.

His inheritance was great, but his responsibilities matched it. The Egyptian empire comprised Libya, Cyrenaica and Ethiopia, Phoenicia and Palestine, Cyprus and the Cyclades, and even slices of south-western Asia Minor: territories that required a standing army of 200,000 troops and a navy of 1,500 vessels to police. And as if the burden was not enough for the ruler, there was the administration of Egypt to watch. Fortunately finance gave no anxiety: the treasury held a substantial reserve of 70,000 talents, the annual revenue of the country was steadily increasing. In other respects the conduct of government, if complaints and petitions were an indication, was crying for reform. In his last years Philadelphus, ill and listless, had withdrawn himself from the labours of government, and administrative officials had taken advantage of the fact. Cyrene's handling of its domestic business was not remarkable for virtue, as Euergetes knew very well, but in the matter of impurity Egyptian administration far outstripped it. From top to bottom government in Egypt was honeycombed with abuse. A notorious offender was the dioecetes, and of Apollonius, still holding office, Euergetes determined to make an example. He was meditating the form of punishment when a cry from his sister Berenice, wife of Antiochus II of Syria, reached his ears. It was a prayer for help that he could not resist. The Ptolemies were often unfaithful husbands and unnatural fathers, but between brothers and sisters there existed habitually a close and mysterious tie. For this sister Euergetes felt the same profound affection that his father had felt for Arsinoë II, and he hurried to Syria to save her. It had been a condition of her marriage that Antiochus must divorce Laodice, his existing wife, and repudiate her children, and Laodice had departed for Ephesus. But from that refuge, nursing revenge, she began a correspondence with her late husband that ripened into agreeable love-letters. Antiochus was very ready after a brief experience of matrimony with an Egyptian princess, Berenice, daughter of Philadelphus, who perpetually contrasted

the courts of Syria and Egypt to the disadvantage of the first, to reply in the same strain, and presently he rejoined Laodice in Ephesus. There in 247 B.C. death overtook him, and Laodice, proclaiming her own son, Callinicus, King of Syria, prepared to oust her rival. It was no difficult task. Syrian vanity also had taken offence at Berenice's airs of superiority, and the people of Antiochia drove her out of the city. She fled with her little son to the grove of Daphne, took refuge in the temple of Dionysus, and there met death.

Meanwhile, at the head of a well-equipped force, Euergetes was marching north. He was too late. Berenice was dead, and the campaign that followed became one of revenge and not of relief. From Cyprus a powerful Egyptian fleet sailed to co-operate with the land army. It disembarked marines, occupied Cilicia, and so cut the enemy's communications between Ephesus and Antiochia. Leaving the landing parties to invest Ephesus, the admiral steered for the mouth of the Orontes, seized the port of Seleucia in Pieria, and lay there awaiting the arrival of Euergetes. Then began a determined struggle for possession of Antiochia, and, beleaguered by water and land, the capital was soon in straits. Its citizens looked to Laodice for relief, but that queen, shut up in Ephesus, was no better off than the suppliants in Antiochia, and in despair the latter asked for quarter. None was given: inflamed by the murder of his sister, Euergetes handed over to his troops the city to sack. It was not enough to satisfy his vengeance, and he passed on to the conquest of all Seleucid territory east of the Euphrates. Babylon made no resistance, Parthia and Bactria hospitably entertained his ambassadors, Susa and Persepolis surrendered such treasure as had escaped the eye of Alexander the Great, a hoard of 40,000 silver talents and a multitude of sacred images carried off by Cambyses three centuries earlier. India seemed then within his grasp; but Euergetes was no Alexander, and he went back to Syria. Good news awaited him. Off Cos his fleet had routed the enemy and, pushing northward, its commander had occupied the coastline of the Chersonese, the modern Gallipoli. The campaign seemed over: Laodice was isolated in Ephesus, and Callinicus, her son, a fugitive trying to excite Asia Minor.

Fresh trouble was brewing: everywhere in Asia Greek communities stirred uneasily. In the beginning they had applauded Euergetes' campaign: now, measuring his vengeance, they feared lest their turn should come next. The Aegean shared the anxiety of the mainland. Egyptian supremacy over the coastline would

ruin its islands' trade, and rather than submit to that misfortune Rhodes prepared for war. She was a redoubtable enemy: her ships were the terror of every pirate, her maritime code the accepted law of all seafaring people. The Rhodians equipped a squadron that ran the Egyptian blockade of Ephesus, and the example encouraged the kings of Pontus and Cappadocia to join hands with Callinicus. The tables were turned. Callinicus first cleared Cilicia and the valley of the Euphrates of Egyptian garrisons, and then entered Antiochia. That success marked the close of the struggle, and in the peace that followed (240 B.C.) Euergetes succeeded only in retaining Ephesus and Seleucia-in-Pieria, the port of Antiochia. Thus this campaign that had opened so brilliantly closed in humiliating fashion. Syria, the substantial fruit of victory, had been sacrificed in the hope of establishing an empire in Asia beyond the resources of Egypt to hold.

Euergetes did not stay to witness the end: gloomy reports of Egypt had already sent him, laden with booty, hurrying back to Alexandria. He did well to return: confusion was spreading up and down the Nile. Famine and brigandage were devastating the country, and Berenice, in charge of the government, could neither alleviate the first nor repress the second. At this critical moment Euergetes acted with decision: he distributed to the starving people the stocks of wheat and barley he had brought out of Syria, he ordered his veterans to put down brigandage with a heavy hand. Meanwhile he was again enjoying the society of his beloved wife. Five years of separation had not diminished her love or weakened her fidelity. Vengeance and she had parted company at her mother's tragic death, but since her husband wished to wreak his, she let him go with a melancholy smile upon her lips. Then anxiety assailed her. During his absences she made a daily pilgrimage to Canopus, where stood the temple dedicated to Arsinoë Aphrodite. Within its walls she knelt in prayer, imploring the goddess to guard her husband against the perils of war: from its roof she suspended a long lock of her hair, in the hope that the divine Arsinoë would be touched. Her cry was heard, the offering was accepted. But when Euergetes returned, he first chided his wife gently for her foolish vow, and then bade her recover her tresses from the shrine. Dutifully the queen obeyed, only to discover the hair was gone. There was a hue and cry until Conon, the court astronomer, scanning the heavens, detected a cluster of stars hitherto unmarked in the triangle between Leo Virgo and Ursa Major, and named it the Hair of Berenice. The story grew:

the whisper passed that the divine Arsinoë herself had descended on earth and carried off the offering. Alexandria rejoiced at the news, and Callimachus celebrated the miracle in verse.

"Conon it was who saw me shining free,
A lock of hair from Berenice's head,
Amid the stars"¹

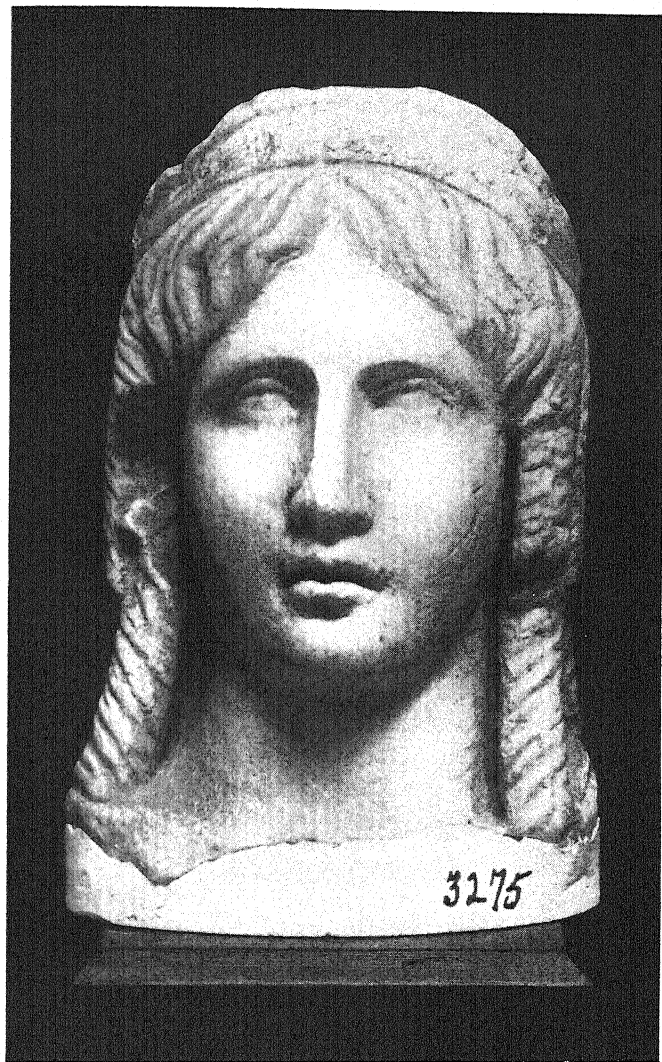
he sang, and Euergetes was well pleased at the fancy.

Unhappily it was intelligible only to the Greek mind, and Euergetes pondered how best he could express his wife's thanks to the gods of Egypt. He had perhaps a double end in view, thinking shrewdly that his throne should rest on a more substantial basis than inheritance. Impressed with the same belief, the first Ptolemy had hoped to bind the two races together by the creation of the god Serapis. But in Serapis the Egyptian had taken only a perfunctory interest, and Euergetes selected the national god Osiris as the deity whom the dynasty desired to honour. Accordingly he built at Canopus a shrine that in size and beauty far outdistanced that of Arsinoë Aphrodite, and beneath the altar laid a gold plate² inscribed with this simple dedication: "King Ptolemy, son of Ptolemy & Arsinoë, Brother and Sister Gods, and Queen Berenice, his sister and wife, dedicate this temple to Osiris."

The experiment won less reputation for him than he had expected: the provincial priesthood even grumbled at the favour perpetually accorded by the throne to Alexandria. It was painful enough that that mushroom city dominated by Greeks should replace Memphis as the seat of government: that it should become now the first habitation of the most widely worshipped god of Egypt was shameful. Euergetes listened to the murmur indignantly. Had he not fed the whole priesthood in the recent famine; had he not restored to the priests of Thebes the divine images stolen by Cambyses, and contributed to the expenses of the sacred bull Apis in Memphis? It would be more becoming if the recipients of his charity had remarked the example of Adule, an insignificant station on the Red Sea coast. There in the barbarous and inhospitable territory of the Troglodytes, Euergetes' admirers had set up a dazzling marble throne, and on its steps had recorded first the number of elephants the Troglodytica had provided for the king's service, and next his conquest of Babylonia, Susiana, Asia Minor, Thrace

¹ The poem has not survived, and posterity only knows it by a paraphrase of Catullus (Ode LXVI, tr. W. Marris).

² Now in the British Museum.



Attributed to Berenice II, wife of Ptolemy Evergetes I

(Greco-Roman Museum, Alexandria)



and Ethiopia.¹ The achievement was perhaps exaggerated, for Euergetes' occupation of Asia Minor and Thrace was confined to the coast, and that of Ethiopia to the conquest of territory bordering the Red Sea.

At this moment he did not choose to quarrel with the priesthood, since he needed their goodwill to undertake a reform he had greatly at heart. It was the substitution of a new chronology, entailing in turn a new calendar in place of one which had served Egypt for some thousands of years. Hitherto the Egyptian year had consisted of twelve months of thirty days apiece, plus the addition of five extra or epagonal days. The calculation had gone astray, since the earth in its passage round the sun needs not 365 days but half a dozen hours more. Thus the ancient Egyptian calendar lagged behind the actual march of time to the extent of one day every four years. The priest perhaps knew the truth, but fractions meant little to him, and to the cultivator chronology was unimportant. The agricultural seasons, inundation, harvest, and unproductivity, made up his year, and of human calculations he was incurious. The confusion penetrated state and commercial chronology: documents were dated indiscriminately by the regnal, financial, Macedonian, and Egyptian year. It was left to Eratosthenes, that master mind, to inspire in Euergetes the ambition of a more correct chronology, and to establish it Euergetes needed the help of the Egyptian priest. So at Canopus in the year 238 B.C. he convened a synod of the high priests, the prophets, the keepers of the sacred vestments, the feather-bearers, the scribes and the subordinate clergy of all the great temples in the land.

Posterity has capriciously allowed Eratosthenes' contribution to learning to fade into oblivion, but his original mind and profound erudition deserve a better fate. He drank greedily from all springs of knowledge: he was at once an astronomer, a mathematician, a geographer, an historian, a philosopher, a critic. So great was his versatility that admirers hailed him as Penthelus, or Master of the Muses, and detractors as Beta, or second in every branch and first in none. Born in Cyrene 276 B.C., he had followed Callimachus to Alexandria, completed his education in Athens, and would have stayed there but for a flattering invitation from Euergetes to return to Egypt as librarian. There, relieved of the need of earning a livelihood by teaching, he betook himself to research

¹ Cosmas, an Indian merchant and in later life an Egyptian monk, copied the inscription in the sixth century A.D.

and study. He wrote a history that began with the siege of Troy, he produced an account of Ancient Comedy, a dissertation upon the geography of the Ancient World, a treatise on mensuration and mathematics, and a discourse upon the planets and fixed stars.¹ If these labours justified his claim to the proud title of philologus, the first of Alexandrians to enjoy that distinction, he never pretended to omniscience. Invited once by an envious rival to trace the wanderings of Ulysses, he answered sweetly: "They will be known when you can name the cobbler who sewed up the bag of the winds, and not before." His supreme achievement was twofold: he succeeded in calculating the circumference of the earth within a hundred odd miles of the correct figure, and he persuaded Euergetes to reform the Egyptian calendar. It was neither his nor his master's fault that the experiment failed.

The synod² found life at Canopus a pleasant holiday: sufficiently distant from Alexandria for the older members to pursue undisturbed their meditation, near enough for the younger to enjoy the hospitality of that meretricious city. It was a new world for the latter. The provincial priest lived monotonously. Duty was light but unvarying: one day was the replica of another. Libations, sacrifices and ritual occupied the morning, the compilation of answers to questions put to the temple oracle filled the afternoon. Concerned only with the advancement of Greek culture, the Mousseion neglected the study of Egyptian tradition, and among its pensioners there was no Herodotus to record the annals of the people. That was not strange, perhaps, seeing that Alexandria confined its relations with provincial Egypt to trade, and the government for the most part to collection of revenue. Left thus to his own devices, the priest lost his ancient interest in learning. His only topic of conversation was gossip, his only ambition promotion in the hierarchy.

At Canopus, comfortably lodged and royally fed, the synod spent some agreeable weeks in drafting the result of their deliberations. It was a verbose decree³ that acknowledged the divinity

¹ J. C. Sandys, *History of Classical Scholarship*. Cambridge, 1903.

² Bouché Leclercq believes that Philadelphus inaugurated the custom of convening synods, thinking thereby to control the Egyptian priesthood. *Histoire des Lagides*, Paris, 1903.

³ Decree of Canopus promulgated in 238-237 B.C., written in hieroglyphics, demotic and greek. Copies inscribed on stone and set up in the great temples exist in the museums of Cairo and the Louvre. J. C. Mahaffy in his *History of Egypt under the Ptolemaic Dynasty* (Methuen, 1899) gives a translation of the Decree.

of the reigning Ptolemy, that accorded to him and to his wife the title Euergetai, or the Benefactor Gods. It enumerated the virtues and exploits of the king, and increased the divine honours paid to the throne: it established a fifth class of the priesthood "the priests of the Benefactor Gods," conferred upon Euergetes' dead child, the infant Berenice, already dignified as Basilissa, other divine honours, and enjoined Egypt to keep holy the first day of the Egyptian month Payni, "the day when the Star of Isis rises": it explained the need of reforming the calendar in order that "the seasons may correspond regularly according to the establishment of the world," and decreed that "one day to be known as the Festival of the Benefactor Gods shall be added every four years to the five epagonal days." The command remained a dead letter. In vain the throne exhorted all inhabitants of Egypt to use the reformed calendar, to adopt the year 311 B.C., the date of the death of Alexander, son of Roxane, as the starting point of the new chronology: Alexandria continued to date documents by the Macedonian moon year, and the provinces to compute the march of time by their inaccurate sun year. Conservatism could go no further.

The synod broke up, the members departed home, and the Benefactor Gods meditated raising yet another temple that in size would outshine all ancient shrines. Over the knotty business of choosing the locality and the god, the royal pair pondered long. Memphis and Thebes, Osiris and Isis were discarded as unsuitable: the connection of the first with the Pharaohs and the association of the second with Alexandria was too intimate.

The search for a site whose glory had departed and a god whose virtue was forgotten led them to Upper Egypt, and midway between Philae and Thebes they found their objective. It was the ancient village of Edfu where Imhotep, the architect and physician of King Zozer of the Third Dynasty, was said to have raised a shrine dedicated to Horus, honoured as the Hawk-god. The tradition caught their fancy, and the royal pair began the construction of the temple at Edfu that still withstands the decaying finger of time. At Thebes also Euergetes found fresh ground for experiment in temple architecture. Karnak attracted him profoundly: its spacious aisles, its towering obelisks and multitudinous shrines held him spellbound. Making the circuit of the temple walls, he marked the massive gateway, the conception of the second Rameses, and the ambition seized him to emulate the example. He could have obliterated a relief or two cut on the pylons,

as certain Pharaohs were in the habit of doing, recording on blank spaces their own exploits: but Euergetes was no thief to rob dead kings, and no braggart to magnify his personal triumphs. His offering to Khonsu, the third of the divine Theban triad, took the more modest form of another noble entrance to the temple, a lofty gateway crowned with a representation of the Hor Behutet protecting with outstretched wings the Benefactor Gods. He passed to the First Cataract, and fell in love with exquisite Philae. Its beauty had persuaded Philadelphus to dedicate a temple to Isis, the patron goddess of the island; but his interest in temple architecture soon vanished, and it was left to the son to execute the father's conception.

On the return voyage to Alexandria, Euergetes came across settlements of Jews: industrious and peaceful colonists, worshipping one God, marrying only among themselves. In the fortunes of these people Euergetes enjoyed an inherited interest. His grandfather had patronized them: his father had even ransomed at a heavy cost 120,000 of these unfortunate captives of war, and Euergetes was meditating upon the origin of this unusual generosity, when at Memphis he learnt that Onias, the high priest of Jerusalem, had flatly declined to pay the tribute of twenty talents due to Egypt. His mood changed. The defiance awoke his anger, and he invited Onias to choose between payment or occupation of Jerusalem. The terrified high priest answered by bidding his nephew Joseph hurry to Egypt and explain to the king that the poverty of Jerusalem was the sole cause of default of payment. An ingratiating fellow, Joseph created a favourable impression at court. He slept in the royal palace, he dined at the royal table, he became in short an honoured guest in place of being a humble petitioner. No word was spoken concerning the tribute, and Joseph employed his time, perhaps at the request of the king, in attending the sale of taxes by auction. It was a business that had become more profitable to the purchaser than to the state, and Euergetes suspected the existence of a ring. The astute Joseph was soon quite certain of it, and at Memphis he had an opportunity of justifying the royal doubts. The occasion was an auction of the taxes of Samaria and Phoenicia; when the bidding stopped at a sum far below the true figure, Joseph seized the chance. Pushing his way through the company, he doubled the bid from eight to sixteen thousand talents. The auctioneer was dumbfounded; then, recovering his voice, cried: "Name your security," and the ring of tax-farmers angrily re-echoed the demand. "The King of Egypt," was

Joseph's answer, and indeed any king of this period would have willingly become the guarantor of an individual who put eight thousand talents into the royal pocket.¹

Upon the labours of the first years of his reign Euergetes could look back with satisfaction. In war he had shown his capacity, for religion his respect, and there thus remained only the task of purifying the administration. It was a belated duty. Occupied with other business, Euergetes had closed his eyes to the growing abuses of the government, and certain public services now scarcely deserved the name. The police were one of the number. Organized brigandage had been stamped out, but life and property were still sadly insecure. Philadelphus had designed to keep order by planting colonies of discharged mercenaries up and down the Nile: but perpetual hostilities had necessitated recall to the ranks of these veterans, and Euergetes' own campaign in Syria accentuated the mischief. Of these once flourishing settlements the larger number had now disappeared, and provincial governors without their assistance could neither maintain security nor force the cultivator to pay his taxes. Appreciating the need of strengthening the hands of his agents, Euergetes established a gendarmerie recruited from Greeks, Cretans and Persians, men unfit for military but capable of police service, and supplemented the new force with village watchmen engaged locally. It was a numerous but not very efficient combination: even an insignificant village seemed to require now ten gendarmes and a score of watchmen. On the other hand, in place of being an expense to the treasury, this provincial police was even a source of revenue. No pay, clothing or rations were issued: instead the state offered the recruit a holding of undeveloped land, bade him cultivate it, and claimed the customary share of its produce. The victim protested loudly, and to soften his dissatisfaction the government obliged villages enjoying special protection to contribute to the cost. The unhappy cultivator grumbled but obeyed till the order was stretched to the duty of supplying troops on the march from station to station with board, lodging and transport. Nor was he the only victim. Local authority was in the habit of calling upon the priesthood to contribute also, and certainly military requisition was no more popular in Ptolemaic Egypt than it would be to-day.

Requisition of transport and supplies was only one of many

¹ Josephus, *Antiquities*, bk. xii., ch. 4, div. 2.

agricultural grievances: a second, resented even more fiercely, was the habitual practice of the state to value for revenue purposes all cereals while they were still in the ground. The cultivator was again the victim of the procedure. The harvest rarely fulfilled the official estimate, and the peasant had to make up the deficit from his sesame and croton oil. His profit from these crops was meagre enough: when the state had taken in taxes a third to a half of their production and the apomoirā, or the queen's pin money, a further sixth, the farmer had little return for his labour. Rather than submit to the extortion, the inhabitants of a village would desert their fields and shelter in a neighbouring temple that enjoyed the right of asylum. Cereals in Ptolemaic times, indeed, were never profitable crops to sow or reap: either the state claimed the entire harvest, or the producer had to exchange the balance left for seed. Nor was he a free agent in the matter of sowing: at least not in the royal domains and probably not elsewhere. The state decided the rotation, and even the powerful dioecetes had to follow the instructions of the throne on the point. "The king has ordered us to sow land twice," he informed his agent; "so as soon as you harvest the crops, irrigate the soil by hand, or if that is impossible set up shadoofs for the purpose. Let the water remain on the fields for five days only, and then sow wheat."¹ It was a primitive attempt at perennial irrigation.

If petitions told the truth, the state also was the victim of officialdom. The trouble was largely due to the passion for private trading practised by all departments of the government. Apollonius, the dioecetes of Philadelphus, set an example that his subordinates dutifully followed, and, taking alarm, Philadelphus in the last years of his reign had transferred him from the revenue to the administrative side. It was a warning that the offender did not heed: in his new office he found even wider scope to defraud the state, and in Middle Egypt he became a more powerful personality than ever. Euergetes had dismissed him, but Apollonius' agents stayed on, and their influence over local administration persisted. Philadelphia and Memphis, the capitals of the two nomes Arsinoites and Memphis, were instances in point, and in both Zenon, the confidential bailiff of the ex-dioecetes, was paramount. This Zenon, an astute native of Caria, knew the ins and outs of government better than any official. He might well do so, for his master used him in public business as a convenient agent whom he could command and disown as circumstances required.

Certainly Apollonius' estate in the Arsinoites or Moeris nome, in Zenon's capable hands, prospered. All went well in the beginning. The soil was virgin, the production of wheat and barley and Indian corn phenomenal. Then came a succession of low Niles and failure of the harvests, and, getting behind-hand with their rents, the tenants pleaded for time. But time was the last commodity that Apollonius, requiring a return on his capital, would give, and he ordered Zenon to show defaulters no mercy. "Pay or go to prison" was therefore Zenon's answer, and the victim cooled his heels in jail. Useless to appeal to Alexandria. If the rents were unpaid the king would get no taxes, and across petitions praying for the royal intervention Philadelphus would scribble irritably: "Send the writer under escort to Us, and sell up the rascal lock, stock and barrel." Equally useless to presume upon Zenon's acquaintance, as a certain unfortunate Callipsus discovered. "Have you fallen asleep, Zenon," he asked plaintively, "regardless of me in prison? Think of the hay already cut that I estimate at 3,000 sheaves. Think of the herds and flocks too." He added a postscript. "See here," he wrote persuasively, "can't we arrange this little matter amicably? Suppose you release me, and my wife goes to prison, what then?" For answer, Zenon hurried on the sale of Callipsus' hay and stock.

In time, agriculture looked up again, but Zenon's troubles were no lighter. He was, in fact, not only a bailiff, but also purveyor in-chief of his master's household in Alexandria. Some of its members thought he had nothing to do but to execute their commissions. "Why don't you send sufficient hay?" wrote an angry stud-groom. "We haven't enough for a single day, and the horses are falling ill." "I want you at once to buy me that black stallion I noticed with a swelling on his leg—cheaply, mind," commanded Artemidorus, one of the many physicians attached to Apollonius' household, and followed up the request by ordering him "to send at once a consignment of pigs to sacrifice to Isis."¹ This Isis business caused Zenon many sleepless nights. As the festival approached, the ladies of the household also wrote their commands. "Will Zenon send all the seasoned wood he has at once to Alexandria to burn at the festival," ran one request, while a second urged him "to dispatch Petius, the Phrygian flute-player, and Zenobius, the effeminate, with his drums, cymbals and castanets, who must wear his fairest clothes, as the women want him to dance at the festival." How was a bailiff to balance his

¹ Zenon Papyrus, Cairo Museum, No. 59,191.

accounts when the pigs he had been fattening for the market and the timber he had been saving to repair his river-craft vanished in a flash to do honour to a pagan goddess?

Incidentally Zenon did not throw about his own money. He lent it, but charged twenty-five per cent. interest, and required Philom, one client, not only to mortgage his salary for a year in advance as security for the interest, but also to hand over two women slaves in addition. Women he did not trust, either in the matter of money or in that of virtue. Asclepias, for instance, could get nothing out of him.¹ This lady had gone up-river to recapture a truant husband. No news of him came to hand, and at Thebes Asclepias was herself stranded for lack of money. She had not even sufficient cash to pay her fare back to Memphis. "Wouldn't Zenon," she wrote humbly, "come to the rescue?" Zenon certainly would not: he knew this lady's temper, and his sympathy in the business lay with the husband and not with the wife.

A general impression also was prevalent that Zenon had the customs officials of Middle Egypt under his thumb, and strangers as well as acquaintances unblushingly begged him to influence these officials on their behalf. Anxiety to escape internal custom and transit duties was intelligible enough. Every article was dutiable, and every merchant complained of their intolerable incidence. "You, Zenon, seem surprised," testily wrote an Alexandrian man of business, "that I appear ignorant of the fact that clothing is subject to dues. Of course I know it very well: but I also know that you can arrange the matter for me." Smuggling was common throughout the Ptolemaic period, but no man's credit suffered for either offering or taking bribes. Officials themselves were not always impeccable: witness the instructions given by a superior to a subordinate in the matter of payment. "As soon as you collect sufficient freight dues, pay Crates seventy-five drachmas less four: but make the man write out a receipt stating he has received the seventy-five in full. It seems to me," added the angry superior, "you are neglecting your opportunities."

As for Zenon, his good nature had its limits. He was not, for example, going to scour the countryside to procure a pot of Attic honey that a stranger needed, whether or no, as the writer assured him, "the gods had declared only this particular honey will restore my eyesight." Nor would he oblige another who asked

¹ Zenon Papyrus, Cairo Museum, No. 48,936.

him to procure "a jar of sweet wine," even though a postscript pointed out: "If I could have bought the wine in the market, I would not have troubled you." Incidentally this correspondent was an exception: some had neither the grace to apologize nor the courtesy to send a line of thanks, while others complained indignantly of the time Zenon took to fulfil their commissions. An impertinent fellow of the name of Dinocrates actually took him to task for a delay in the despatch of new tent-poles and wine-jars, and sulkily demanded a full explanation. In short, Zenon drew the line somewhere. He might for a consideration assist an acquaintance to place his boy in the government service, but the son of the acquaintance's friend was another matter. "A friend, knowing your kind disposition," wrote Platon, a police officer, "asks me to tell you about his son. The boy needs a job and a salary."¹ So did Zenon, and he was not going to ask a favour that might imperil his relations with the state to please a common policeman's friend.

Zenon kept no private diary, or if he did it has not survived the centuries, but the office papyri indicate his methodical turn of mind. Every morning he entered in his day-book incoming and outgoing correspondence, audited the office account, mapped out the next day's engagements—duties that ranged from the purchase of goat-skins and the hire of beasts to the sale of weedy pigs and wine that had turned sour, from a meeting of nomarch or omda to the issue of seed wheat to tenants. Of his wardrobe he took particular care. Periodically he inventoried its contents, examined every garment, marking it "washed" or "unwashed," "new" or "part-worn" as its condition required. It was a laborious business, for the number of wrappers, cloaks, tunics, mantles, socks, girdles (clay-coloured for winter, white for summer wear), pillow-cases, coverlets and so on he needed seemed extremely extensive for a simple bailiff.²

He was a busy man, always on the move between his own and neighbouring nomes. He hurries one day to Memphis to superintend the repainting of the royal rest-house, he races back the next day to Philadelphia, his headquarters, lest he is being cheated. Pais is waiting for him, vowing that he cannot bear to see Zenon robbed by a rascally rival. Zenon, he swore, was being defrauded in the matter of carpets, damped to make them con-

¹ Zenon Papyrus, Cairo Museum, No. 59,192.

² *Ibid.*, No. 59,092.

form to specification, and the shocked Pais professes his readiness out of pure friendship, being given the same material, to weave fourteen carpets in place of ten. Paesis, a potter, also cannot tolerate Zenon being deceived. This time it is the question of coating wine-jars with resin, and rather than that Zenon should suffer at the hands of a competitor, Paesis offers to undertake the commission himself more cheaply and more efficiently.

It was well to be occupied, for provincial Egypt was decidedly dull. A village enjoyed few distractions: inundation, harvest and unproductivity alone marked the passage of time. Even marriage was a prosaic affair, a simple ceremony of signing a contract attested by half a dozen witnesses. The bridegroom covenanted to abstain from bigamy and infidelity and to provide the bride with a suitable maintenance, the bride to obey, as a wife should a husband, and to quit the house only with his permission. Divorce was no less practical: the wife recovered her dowry back and was free to re-marry. Inter-marriage was common. Greeks, Cretans and Persians settled in the provinces took Egyptian women to wife, and their offspring bore Egyptian and Greek names indiscriminately.

Bickering was incessant and the public baths a favourite battleground, as the experience of a certain government storekeeper testifies. This respectable official, "being seriously ill," thought it fit to indulge in a bath. He had better have stayed at home, for as he left the establishment, an enemy, "without regard to decency," he complained, "beat and kicked me in the stomach, and the attendants joined in the assault." Even women were not safe from these truculent fellows. Philista, a Greek lady, underwent the same melancholy experience, as a papyrus exhibit in the Cairo Museum indicates. She was about to enter the establishment when an attendant thought it "amusing" (to quote her own comment) "to pour boiling water over me, scalding my body and endangering my life."¹ Drenching an enemy was always a popular revenge. Jilted by Heraclides, the exasperated Penobastis, an Egyptian girl, revenged the insult by emptying from an upper window a pail of slops upon her passing lover. Nor was this all. While the victim was wiping his eyes, the girl ran out, seized Heraclides by the neck, spat in his face, rent his mantle, cursed his father and mother. The man, of course, may have deserved what he got, but in prison Penobastis had leisure to reflect that poetic justice is the prerogative of goddesses and not of mortal woman.

¹ Zenon Papyri, Cairo Museum, Nos. 58,964 and 58,963.

In the village the iniquities of government were a perennial topic of conversation. No doubt the peasant had cause to grumble: what with the tax monopolies and unpaid services, the state stripped him as bare as a bone. Military requisition he resented in particular, evaded when he could. "If authority thinks that I and my brother will provide the soldiers with transport, they are mistaken," wrote one sulky cultivator, and straightway removed himself, his harvest, and his stock to a neighbouring village. The comarch or omda usually got the blame. He was probably no peasant incorruptible, and the administration doubtless had excellent reasons to think him in league with the peasant. "You are positively the one and only person who perpetually ignores our pressing commands," wrote an angry inspector to one of his comarchs. "Though we have constantly written to you, you pay no attention to our orders." On the other hand part of the abuse that descended on the comarch's head was perhaps unjustified. "So you can't produce in your village calves?" sneered another irritated officer. "Has your way of feeding the animals, then, been to throw them on the beans?" and he added warningly: "You play the fool at the risk of your neck and not mine."

But over the peccadilloes of Zenon and his fellows Euergetes wasted no time: his eye was fixed firmly upon the government official. It was impossible to expect good administration where the staff was indolent and incompetent. Of its members, the oeconomus, half an executive, half an inspecting officer, was the most important. On the oeconomus depended the welfare of every village, the happiness of every peasant, and Euergetes' first step was the publication of a memorandum which the oeconomus was "to consult about everything." It was a code of behaviour rather than a code of duties: a philosophy of Greek bureaucracy. "In your tours of inspection," it began, "try to cheer the people and put them in better heart. If a man complains of the village comarch or scribe on any matter touching agriculture, inquire into the grievance." Always the oeconomus was to bear in mind the importance to the state of agriculture. "When sowing is complete" the memorandum advised a thorough inspection of "the crops prescribed by the schedule." The oeconomus had also other duties: he was reminded to keep an eye upon the weaving business, to discover by hook or crook the whereabouts of illicit oil factories, and to audit revenue accounts village by village. "No impossible task," suggested the memorandum, "if you will devote yourself to it." Finally, the king summed up in a few words his conception of the duty of a govern-

ment official: "Your foremost business is to act with peculiar care and honesty: your next to behave righteously and to keep clear of bad company." Egypt would have been the happier had the administration taken to heart the advice.

The experiment did not achieve much success. Vested interests and traditional opposition to change accounted in part for the failure, Euergetes' declining vigour in the last years of his reign for the rest. Mind and temper had darkened, the good-humoured prince had become a morose and suspicious sovereign, who thought now more of proscriptions than of reforms. No man's life or property was safe in these gloomy days: a disappointing ending to a reign that had begun so promisingly. Berenice alone could humour this disordered man. As they sat one evening casting dice, a document was pushed into the king's hand. It was a list of political victims condemned to die. Cursing the interruption, Euergetes would have sealed the roll without knowledge of its contents, had not Berenice snatched the list and hid it in her bosom, crying: "A king should think more of life than of the throw of a dice." It was well said, and perhaps the last admonition Euergetes received. Worn out in mind and in body, he died in 221 B.C. after a reign of twenty-five years.

PTOLEMY PHILOPATOR

221—203 B.C.

PHILOPATOR, eldest child of a family of four children—Magas, a younger brother, Berenice and Arsinoë, two sisters—succeeded on his father's death. It was a fine inheritance, the more stable in that Egypt's most dangerous neighbours, Antiochus III of Syria, later known as the Great, and Philip of Macedonia, were minors. The date of his birth is unknown, but he was perhaps twenty-five years old at his accession, an age when discretion is expected from a sovereign. Unhappily the prospect of Philopator fulfilling that hope was remote: he was a violent and licentious young man, the grief of his mother and the despair of his patient tutor Eratosthenes. To the admonition of the first and the counsel of the second Philopator was deaf, preferring the flattery of companions young in years but old in vice who surrounded him. From them he learnt to admire licence and despise virtue. Nothing was allowed to interfere with his pleasure. Embassies arriving to congratulate him upon the succession departed without seeing the king, and Alexandria, ashamed, repented its harsh criticism of Euergetes. Proscription of life and property ceased: but for how long, asked the citizens, in a state whose ruler kept company with lewd men and loose women? All eyes at this juncture turned to Berenice. It was said that the queen, in despair, contemplated setting the younger son on the throne, and Alexandria heartily wished her success.

A whisper of the conspiracy reached the ears of Sosibius, the most powerful personality of the day, an artful and ambitious Greek, prepared to pursue any course that promised power and place. His rise had been phenomenal: from a humble parasite, he had become the chief adviser of the Crown: a man of talent, but unscrupulous in his methods and merciless towards all who crossed his path. None the less the future was uncertain. Throughout Euergetes' last years Sosibius had borne in mind the contingency of the king's approaching death: to guard against it he had assiduously courted the heir, provided him with entertainments, and

encouraged him to resent his mother's interference. But new kings prefer new faces, and the favourite of one reign is seldom the favourite of its successor; and with that knowledge in mind Sosibius considered his safest course. Should he make himself indispensable to the son, or encourage Berenice, the queen-mother, to supplant Philopator with Magas, a younger and more pliant prince. Either alternative had an element of danger. The king might ignore his advances, the queen-mother betray him. The hesitation passed: he chose the first alternative and baited his trap. His first business was to win the king's confidence. It was no very difficult task, and Sosibius soon had the measure of his victim. His tactics were astute: his conversation was an agreeable change from the perpetual criticism and philosophic reflections of Berenice and Eratosthenes. He neither hectoring nor lectured the sovereign: he professed on the contrary humble admiration for the words that fell from the royal lips. That was not enough: his ascendancy, to be complete, needed a third party, young enough to be the recipient of the king's private thoughts.

It was a position that only a woman could fill, and Sosibius looked about for a girl capable of inflaming passion, yet sufficiently unscrupulous to twist it to the interest of her employer. He had no need to search far: Alexandria was full of agreeable virgins willing to be wives or hetaeras, as circumstances dictated. There could be no question of marriage in this instance. Philopator's fate had been settled by his parents years ago: he was to conform to Egyptian tradition and marry his sister Arsinoë. Philadelphus had taken another Arsinoë to wife, and Egypt had blessed the union: it was in the interest of the dynasty that Euergetes' heir should follow the grandfather's example.

There happened to be in Alexandria at this moment a girl of the very type Sosibius required: an acknowledged wit and beauty, whose mother Oenanthe was currently reported to be seeking a settlement, legitimate or the reverse, for Agathoclia, the daughter. The affair was soon arranged: the king made the girl's acquaintance, and Agathoclia moved into the palace. She fulfilled her dual office admirably: she was a charming mistress, a perfect agent, and the way was now clear to dispose of Berenice, an obvious obstacle to Sosibius' intention of becoming ruler all but in name of Egypt. He hesitated to accomplish her disappearance without the king's consent, and to Agathoclia he left the task of obtaining it. The girl knew how to do her work. She blackened Berenice's character, she disclosed the extent of her perfidy, and, terrified at the idea of

conspiracy, Philopator acquiesced in the crime. It was no time now for half-measures: two other members of the family, each a potential enemy, must go, and first Lysimachus, the uncle, and then Magas, the brother, followed Berenice to the grave. Sesibius breathed now more freely. Only Cleomenes, ex-king of Sparta, a fugitive from his court but a popular figure in Alexandria, remained a possible rival, and his removal Sosibius left for a convenient moment.

Defeated in a domestic struggle at Sellasia in 222 B.C., Cleomenes, against the advice of a trusted friend, had taken ship—"better men than I," he exclaimed, "have given way to enemies,"—and he had steered boldly for Alexandria. The dying Euergetes received the fugitive graciously, pensioned him handsomely and promised vaguely to help him recover his kingdom. Then there befell Cleomenes the customary experience of a dethroned king. Conscience-stricken perhaps by the murder of his mother, Philopator hesitated to approve a second crime until some impartial adviser confirmed the need of putting Magas to death in the interest of the elder brother's safety. So to Cleomenes he exposed his pretended doubts of Magas' loyalty, twisting his words so that the ex-king of Sparta would understand the answer Philopator expected from him, and hinting that he would stand to gain by approving of the crime. But the latter, too honest to take advantage of the opportunity, answered: "The more brothers a king had, the greater the stability of the throne."¹ Angrily Philopator dismissed the speaker, and saw him no more. Marking the way the wind blew, Cleomenes presently asked leave to return to the Peloponnese. The petition was unanswered, and thinking Sosibius to be his friend, he begged the Greek to intervene. Sosibius was in two minds. He would have been glad to be rid of him in the belief that "the lion and the lamb cannot share the same stall": on the other hand, he thought this ex-king a lesser danger to him in Egypt than again on the throne in the Peloponnese. Cleomenes read his doubts, and bade him have no fear. "See," he carelessly said, "in Alexandria there are 3,000 Peloponnese and 1,000 Cretan veterans, who at a nod from me will do all I command." That boast proved the ruin of the speaker.

Pacing the sea-shore one morning, Cleomenes met a fellow-countryman, a sea-captain, discharging a cargo of horses. He bantered the sailor. "Hail, Nicagoras," he cried, "you would have done better for yourself to bring a consignment of boys and girls. That's the type of cargo that pleases best this king of Egypt." The gibe went

¹ "Cleomenes," Plutarch's *Lives*.

the round of Alexandria, and Sosibius interviewed Nicagoras, hinting that the captain would be well paid for a letter accusing Cleomenes of treasonable language. The letter was duly written, shown to the king, and Cleomenes put under arrest. For some weeks he lay in prison until, despairing of release, he plotted escape. Giving out that a pardon had come, he invited his guards to celebrate the welcome news. The troops asked nothing better, and drank Cleomenes' health cheerfully. But the liquor was drugged and, slipping through a wicket gate, Cleomenes joined his friends. His objective now was revolution. At the head of his veterans he marched through the streets, calling upon all citizens to join him. He was haranguing a knot of people when Ptolemy, governor of Alexandria, drove up. The chariot was stopped, and Ptolemy, dragged from his seat, was held as a hostage. The news spread like wildfire. The Jewish and Egyptian communities barricaded their houses, the Macedonians took counsel together. They had no great affection for the degenerate Ptolemy who sat on the throne, but was it becoming, asked the leaders, that they should help a Spartan to overcome a Macedonian dynasty? There could only be one reply to the question, and the community followed the example of the Jews and Egyptians. It was the end of Cleomenes. Failing to storm the citadel, he with his companions took shelter in a neighbouring house. The plot had failed and, drawing their swords, the conspirators fell upon one another, dying like "brave men and Spartans." To Fanteus Cleomenes confided the mournful task of making sure that none remained alive to suffer the shame of public execution, and as Fanteus stepped over the corpses, he pricked with his dagger each body. At the side of Cleomenes he sat down, kissed him on the mouth, covered up the face, and, plunging the dagger into his own heart, fell dead across the corpse of his leader.

More serious was a threat from the north. Antiochus III of Syria, accounting Philopator a contemptible enemy, was arming to recover territory that his ancestor Seleucus had bequeathed to the dynasty. Thinking the theatre of war too vast for a single commander-in-chief to superintend, Antiochus divided up its responsibilities. The conduct of the operations in Syria and Phoenicia, territory won by Euergetes of Egypt and still held by his son, he reserved for himself: that of the campaigns in Asia Minor and across the Euphrates he confided to three lieutenants. History should have warned him against the peril of a divided command. Molon and Alexander across the Euphrates declared themselves

independent, Achaeus in Asia Minor began a treasonable correspondence with Egypt. Antiochus struck at once at the two first, routed them, and, leaving the punishment of Achaeus to the future, began his campaign against Egypt. His first objective was the recapture of Seleucia-in-Pieria, the port of the Syrian capital Antiochia, an obvious and visible testimony of Euergetes' successful campaign a generation ago. To leave this Seleucia in Egyptian occupation with Achaeus hovering in the background would have been poor strategy, and Antiochus invested it by sea and land. It should have held out for months, but Leonatus, the commander, heavily bribed, capitulated at the first assault, and Theodotus, strategus of Phoenicia, coming up to the relief, succumbed also to the same temptation. Thus Antiochus without fighting regained not only Seleucia-in-Pieria but all Coelesyria, and the road to Egypt lay open. He dared not take it: Egypt was begging Achaeus to make a diversion, and timidly Antiochus turned back.

That news greatly relieved Philopator. At Sosibius' earnest solicitation he had gone to Memphis; but nothing would induce him to move a step nearer the enemy, and, assured now that the danger was over, he hurried back to Alexandria. Sosibius let him go, thinking perhaps the king's departure to be a blessing in disguise. But the astute Sosibius knew the peril was only postponed, and, better acquainted than the king with the weakness of Egypt, he knew her need of ships and leaders. The passing to the enemy of Leonatus and Theodotus told its own melancholy story, and he needed leisure to build and man a fleet, to choose and engage experienced commanders. Time was his prime requirement, and to gain it he tricked Antiochus into the belief that Egypt would capitulate rather than fight. He went off to Antiochia to negotiate terms: he invited Rhodes, Athens and Corinth to share the deliberations, and confided to Agathocles, brother of the king's mistress, the reconstruction of the army.

It was a drastic business. Weak units were disbanded, others raised on a territorial basis; elderly and incapable officers were paid off, younger and more energetic leaders engaged to train Egyptian levies. Nothing was left undone to encourage the recruits. Orators addressed them on parade, veterans rejoining from their cleruchs or colonies inspired their fighting spirit. More dramatic was the decision to employ the Egyptian in the fighting line. Hitherto that honour had been confined to the mercenary soldier, and the submissive Egyptian was relegated to one or other auxiliary service. It had been a doubtful policy, a waste of good material, and seeing

that the Thutmoses and Rameses of the New Empire owed their triumphs to native troops, Sosibius thought, not unreasonably, of reverting to the practice of ancient Egypt.

Thus at one stroke the army became a national force, and in the phalanx there marched shoulder to shoulder the Egyptian and the Macedonian. The innovation startled the old-fashioned mercenary, and he was the more indignant when Agathocles transferred to the agema or household guards the pick of the new levies. Army organization was still identical with that of Alexander. Supreme command lay in the hands of the king: the strategus, hypostrategus and the epistrategus composed the general staff. The cavalry tactical unit was the eile, the administrative the hipparchia: those of the infantry were the synlagma and the syntagma. The grammateus or paymaster issued pay partly in money, partly in kind, the hyperestes or quartermaster the rations. Every soldier carried on his person an identity document, showing his name, his father's name, his country of origin, and the number of his unit. Except in the matter of pay the Egyptian seems to have suffered no disability, and perhaps not even on that score, seeing that the mercenary, a volunteer, could fairly claim a higher wage than the Egyptian, presumably a conscripted soldier. In other respects Agathocles abolished distinction between the two: each carried the Macedonian pike, each served under officers of his own nationality.¹ To Ptolemais in Ethiopia fresh hunting parties were hastily dispatched to bring up to strength elephant units. One elephant to every thousand soldiers was the accepted establishment of an army, and a prudent commander hesitated to take the field with less. Very likely the service was unpopular, despite the testimony of Acarnan, the officer in charge of one expedition.² Presumably short rations and a trying climate bred discontent in the hunting parties, or Menes, a staff officer, would not have written urging his commander on the Red Sea to be patient. He gave an assurance that their relief was on the point of departing, that the hunters were being selected, that corn ships from Heröopolis and elephant transports from Berenice had received orders to sail³

Service in the navy was equally disliked. The life was harder,

¹ G. Lesquier, *Les institutions militaires de l'Égypte sous les Lagides*. Paris.

² Recorded on a black marble block: *Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique*, xviii., 149.

³ Petrie Papyri, ii., 40.

the risk greater: the Macedonian disliked the first, the Egyptian dreaded the second. If Philopator had a navy at all, he owed the good fortune to his grandfather Philadelphus who was said "to surpass everyone in the number of his ships." Certainly that king had built generously: his fleet and troop-transports at one period of the reign numbered 4,000 vessels, varying in oarage from thirty banks to a single bank. But a passion for leviathans had then overtaken all Mediterranean countries. Hiero of Syracuse, the first Antiochus of Syria, and other kings were all building furiously, and the trireme, once the ship of the line, had expanded into quinqueremes and even larger hulls. The precise significance of the term trireme remains a mystery, and opinion differs whether the rating implies three banks of oars superposed, or more simply three divisions of rowers, deck, between-decks, and lower deck.¹

At Antiochia negotiation dragged on: forced by circumstances to abandon his campaign against Egypt, Antiochus now sought to convince the world of the justice of his claim to Coelesyria. Had not that territory, he asked passionately, passed to his ancestor Seleucus as his share of the victory of Ipsus: was it reasonable of Egypt to dispute a claim allowed a century before? But Sosibius had a pertinent answer: could Antiochus deny that the first Ptolemy had befriended this same Seleucus on the clear understanding that Egypt's possession of Coelesyria was never to be challenged. So argument continued, until Antiochus angrily invited Sosibius to choose between war and peace. For reply the Egyptian left Antiochia. He had nothing to gain by further talk: he had given Agathocles time to reorganize the army, and he was prepared to put its mettle to the test. He was hardly back in Alexandria before the opportunity arrived. Antiochus, having retaken the field, had driven the strategus of Coelesyria behind the Jordan and was marching on Egypt. The news stirred even the indolent Philopator: encouraged by his youthful sister Arsinoë, he moved to Pelusium, crossed Sinai, and camped outside Raphia, where Antiochus awaited him.²

In point of numbers the King of Egypt held a slight advantage: at his back lay 65,000 foot, including a phalanx of 25,000 men, four-fifths of whom were Egyptians, supported by strong contingents of Thracians, Cretans, Peloponnesians, Persians, Libyans,

¹ A. B. Cook, *Journal Hellenic Studies*, vol. xix., 1899, on "Ship Development."

² Polybius, bk. v., para. 79, *et seq.*

and Gauls, 5,000 mounted Macedonians and Thessalians, and seventy-three African elephants. Antiochus' infantry were 10,000 fewer, but his superiority in cavalry and Indian elephants atoned for the deficiency. For the space of a week the two armies stared at one another over their palisades, each waiting for the other to expose his battle formation. Then at dawn on the 22nd June, 217 B.C., the Egyptians struck camp, and deployed: cavalry and elephants on the wings, phalanx in the centre, light infantry in the gaps and the rear. Antiochus followed suit, adapting his dispositions to those of his enemy. Meanwhile Philopator passed along his own front, halting here and there to address the troops: at his side rode the girl Arsinoë, a picturesque figure on a battle-field with hair flowing loose in the breeze and eyes damp with emotion, adding her own to her brother's words. That done, the royal pair took up their place on the left flank, and the battle began with an advance of elephants on both sides. It was an unequal conflict. Terrified by the savage trumpeting of the Indian elephants, the Africans turned tail and fled. Nothing could stop their panic. They penetrated their own line, trampled down horse and rider, and Antiochus completed the confusion by heading a furious cavalry charge. Carried away by the ardour of pursuit, he imprudently galloped after the flying enemy, and so lost his advantage. It was a grave error: pursuit had uncovered his centre and laid it open to a counter-attack. Impatiently awaiting the chance was Echebrates, the cool and resourceful commander of Philopator's right wing, and once Antiochus was out of sight Echebrates set his troops in motion. Ordering his infantry supports to the front he led his cavalry out to the right, changed front unperceived and charged the enemy's left flank. The manœuvre was successful and Echebrates, riding round the rear of the enemy's phalanx, again changed front. There he halted to wind his horses, threatening the enemy's line of retreat. It had been a brilliant inspiration, an instance of how an adroit counterstroke can change the fortune of a battle. Thus far the conflict had been a cavalry affair: the turn of the heavy infantry was now to come. Until this point both phalanxes had stood passive spectators of the combat that raged on the flanks. Of the two kings Antiochus had disappeared and Philopator was sheltering under the lee of his own phalanx. There its commander, Sosibius, found him. It was not easy to persuade the king to leave his refuge. He had escaped death once by a miracle, he was disinclined to risk his life a second time. Valuable

minutes went by while Sosibius and Arsinoë implored Philopator to lead his phalanx against the enemy, and Echeocrates trembled lest he had delivered his stroke in vain. Happily Antiochus' commander hesitated. Isolated on both wings, robbed of supports, and in peril of discovering retreat barred, he remained inactive, until a shout of fear from his own ranks startled him into decision. Towards the Syrian phalanx there was advancing a compact mass of men moving under a forest of gleaming pikes, and, overtaken by sudden panic, the enemy commander sounded the retire. Meanwhile Antiochus, miles from the battle, was resting his horses, when a cloud of dust over Raphia indicated that his phalanx was in full retreat. Later in the day he took stock of the situation. It did not favour continuance of the struggle: casualties had been heavy, the spirit of the survivors was broken, and with a dejected army at his heels Antiochus took the road to Antiochia.

Sosibius would have consummated the triumph by following up pursuit and so forcing the enemy to make another stand or capitulate; but Philopator preferred to dawdle through Coelesyria and Phoenicia. It was an agreeable promenade: the population saluted him respectfully, poured into his lap gifts of golden crowns and fat purses of money, and Philopator thoroughly enjoyed his triumph. Of war he had had his fill. He had fought a pitched battle, had defeated an enemy who called himself "the Great," and the double honour satisfied his ambition. Moreover, he wanted to return to his mistress, Agathoclia, and to escape from Sosibius' persuasive but tiresome tongue and Arsinoë's craving for fresh glory. He was quite ready to acknowledge Sosibius' services at the proper moment, and to marry his sister at the appointed hour: but till then he preferred the company of Agathocles to that of Sosibius, and the society of Agathoclia to that of Arsinoë.

So Sosibius went on to settle terms of peace with Antiochus, while the victorious army re-crossed Sinai, and Philopator returned to Alexandria by way of Jerusalem. Its Sanhedrin had solicited the honour of a visit, and the king, curious to see the Holy City, graciously accepted the invitation.¹ At the portal of the Temple the high priest met the distinguished guest, and begged him to sacrifice to the Lord God of Israel, the giver of victory. A hum of applause followed performance of the ritual, and the high priest would have led the way out. But Philopator stopped his guide: where, he wished to know, were the sacred relics of the Jews, the Ark and Tables of the Covenant, the rod of Aaron, the golden bowl

¹ Maccabees, bk i.

of manna? Gently the high priest replied that no eye but his might look upon them, that no hand but his might lift the veil of the Holy of Holies, the resting place of the relics. Philopator took the reply amiss: what had Jewish law to do with him or he to do with it. "If others may not pass, I must," he said angrily, and parted the veil. A cry of horror rose from without: every Jew fell on his knees imploring the Lord God of Israel to protect His sanctuary. The prayer was heard. As the king raised the second veil, he fell speechless to the ground. Thus were fulfilled the words of the prophet Isaiah: "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord."

He recovered, and on the way to Egypt meditated punishment of this insolent nation. Memphis was his first halt, and its enthusiasm interrupted his gloomy reflections. The reception almost matched that given to Alexander a century earlier. The high priest welcomed him as beloved by Isis, the people hailed him as a mighty captain of war, and a stele, portraying the king, a Macedonian pike in hand, riding a saddleless charger, and followed by Arsinoë of the flowing hair, commemorated the victory. At Philopator's feet an Asiatic knelt: on his right hand stood Arsinoë, "mistress of the two lands," on his left the divine triad Osiris, Isis and Horus. There followed on behalf of the united priesthood of Egypt an inscription that extolled the virtue and valour of this "King Ptolemy, the Avenger of his Father," and commanded statues of him to be placed in every temple at the side of that of the patron god of the locality offering the king "the sword of victory."¹ It was distorted history: Sosibius, not Philopator, was the true hero of Raphia.

He sailed down the river on board his great pleasure-barge, the *Thalamagus*, or carrier of the royal bedchamber, a replica in miniature of the huge *Thalamagus*² built by his grandfather. He touched at Sais and other towns to receive their congratulations, and to give Alexandria time to make its preparations. His appetite for compliments was still unsatisfied, but Agathoclia knew how to stage a pageant, and her lover spent a happy day parading the streets blocked with spectators struggling to catch a glimpse of the returning warrior. Raphia had wiped out memory of crimes and follies, and the king seized the occasion to assume the title of Philopator, or son of a beloved father.

¹ Raphia Stele, Exhibits Nos. 50,048 and 47,806, Cairo Museum.

² For description, see Athenaeus, bk. v., c. 37.

He thanked the army for its exertions, he wished it joy and health; he ascribed victory "to the unforeseen assistance of our gods and to our own fortitude." That modest confession inspired the hope that Philopator had shed his evil ways. It was not so: throughout the rejoicings his mind had run upon making the Jewish community in Egypt smart for the indignity he had suffered in Jerusalem. No doubt half Egypt and all Alexandria wholeheartedly sympathized with the intention. In the capital the Jew had few admirers and fewer friends: commercially he was a business rival, socially a despised outcast. His obstinate refusal to worship any god but his own was a further cause of offence, and the Greek spoke scornfully of a community who declined to be "companions of our priests." Encouraged by the knowledge, Philopator bade all governors and commanders to arrest "these wicked wretches, traitors and enemies behind our backs," pinion and dispatch them and their families to Alexandria. There, crowded into the Hippodrome, the unhappy victims languished till the king made known his pleasure. When the arena could hold no more, Philopator summoned Hermo, "keeper of the royal elephants," and commanded him to dose his charges with frankincense and wine until, maddened by the drug, the elephants at a signal would trample to death this pestilential people. But at the hour fixed for the crime the king was asleep, and no one dared awake him. Towards sunset he awoke, and fixed execution of his command for the following morning. At dawn Hermo led his five hundred animals into the arena, and formed them into line. Then the Jews within understood their fate. Husbands took a last embrace of their wives, mothers of their children, and the air was rent with cries of fear and sobs of lamentation, until Eleazar, an aged priest, commanded silence. He advanced a few paces, fell on his knees, and uttered a final supplication to the Lord God of Israel. At once two "glorious and terrific angels" descended from the sky, and hovered over the impatient elephants. Frightened by the apparition the great animals turned and made for the entrance and spectators held their breath. It was a sign from Heaven that even Philopator accepted, and every Jew went home unharmed.¹

¹ This episode and that of Philopator's visit to Jerusalem, rest upon the doubtful evidence of the so-called third Book of Maccabees. But that is not to say either story is pure fabrication. Each may depend upon tradition in part historically true. On the other hand Josephus (*Contra Apion II*, 5) ascribes the massacre to the second Euergetes. It is possible that both Philopator and his grandson Euergetes vented their vengeance in similar fashion.

Meanwhile Sosibius was again in Syria, discussing an armistice with Antiochus III. Each seriously wanted peace: the Syrian to settle with Achæus, his disloyal viceroy in Asia Minor, the Egyptian to watch the course of the second Punic War. Midway in that great struggle fortune seemed inclining to Carthage. Hannibal had made good his footing on Italian soil, and was now endeavouring to starve his enemy into submission. But Rome was not yet beaten: the Senate had friends as well as enemies in the Aegean, and to Egypt they turned an appealing eye. It was a delicate business for Egypt. Throughout the rivalry between Rome and Carthage, Egypt had professed an attitude of benevolent neutrality, and Sosibius had no intention of reversing it. None the less Egyptian sympathy lay with Rome: Egypt was "the friend" of the Republic, and she had profited commercially and politically from the relationship. But to this informal connection Sosibius made private reserves. Diplomatic friendship must not entail rupture with Carthage, nor exceed the recognized limits of neutrality. Thus the unexpected arrival at Alexandria of Attilius and Acilius, two Roman commissioners, to renew the friendship between the two nations, placed Sosibius in a difficulty that increased when Philopator accepted from the Senate a handsome toga and ivory chain and Arsinoë a purple cloak. They were embarrassing gifts: to refuse them would be discourteous, to accept them meant a shipload or two of corn in return, virtually a breach of neutrality. Presumably the commissioners knew how to overcome Egyptian scruple. Philopator perhaps was too enamoured with his ivory chain and Arsinoë too much in love with her purple cloak to relinquish them, while Sosibius himself perhaps yielded to other substantial inducements. At all events the Senate got the corn, and the commissioners returned with the welcome news that the Roman people had nothing to fear from a debauched king under the thumb of a venal Greek.

The old life in the palace of Alexandria began again: one orgy followed another, and Agathoclia was the high priestess of all. By her side there sat the king, now boasting of his descent from Dionysus, bearing on his forehead the sign manual of that god, the ivy-leaf. It was a departure from Ptolemaic tradition, which claimed Heracles as the ancestor of the family: a tradition presumably invented to establish the dynasty in the eyes of Macedonians as the lineal successor of Alexander the Great. But ancestral belief meant nothing to the fourth Ptolemy, nor did he wish to make the cult a national one in Egypt. His purpose was

rather to keep it to a favoured few, in whose company he might enjoy the performance of Dionysian mysteries in the theatre. In the matter of religion Philopator indeed had no prejudice, and he applauded Agathoclia's partiality for Isis. It was a concession that any man would make to his wife or mistress, for at this period Isis was the only friend women had in heaven. Her festival was always a general holiday. Government offices were closed, and for three days Egypt commemorated the search of Isis for her dead husband Osiris. Then all Alexandria went to Canopus to witness the launching of the barge dedicated to the goddess. On these occasions Agathoclia was always the central figure of the pageant, a leader of the revels, a marshal of the processions of choirs, maids and matrons of honour and initiates—veritable regiments of women, who escorted the image of the goddess from temple to shore.

From the pageants and festivals that followed one another in one unending series, Arsinoë, the sister-wife, held aloof. Marriage with her brother had been a failure:¹ Philopator would neither abandon his mistress nor purge the court of her satellites. In vain Arsinoë counselled her husband at least to replace the corrupt Agathocles by a more honest agent: in vain she argued that the cupidity of Sosibius was undermining Egyptian loyalty to the dynasty. Admonition and reproach were wasted: Philopator would neither give up his mistress nor break with her friends, and Arsinoë remonstrated no more. A son had been born to her in 209 B.C., and having fulfilled her duty as a queen, she withdrew from the court. The salt of life for her had vanished: she found company thenceforth in her own reflections. Wandering about the precincts of the palace one morning, she discovered herself alone: the king and the court had gone to Canopus, and all Alexandria seemed to have followed the example. It was the Lagynophoria, or flagon-carrier's feast, and Philopator had taken advantage of it to honour his adored god Dionysus. At the gate Arsinoë stopped a passer-by and asked whither he went and why. She was told that it was the day when folk made merry with provisions and drink brought from home. Arsinoë was pensive. "A dirty kind of party," she muttered contemptuously, "a mixed multitude, gorging upon stale food."²

The king's unpopularity deepened. Sober members of the

¹ The date of marriage is uncertain.

² Athenaeus, bk. vii., ch. 2.

household regarded with dismay the king's licentious life, and now and again a "kinsman" bolder than his fellows would hint his anxiety. It needed both courage and a propitious moment to do so, for Philopator's temper was short and his reception of unpalatable advice discouraging. The business of the state in particular was abhorrent to him: he sealed documents without understanding their purport, he authorized expenditure without scrutinizing the cause. Apart from supper parties and drinking bouts, his interest lay in hearing gossip concerning himself. He profoundly but mistakenly believed he was still the adored prince, still the accepted father of his subjects. The fault was not wholly his, since the reports, carefully edited for the royal eye, of spies and agents in the capital and the provinces were the only literature the king read. Little wonder if a hungry people laid the blame of their distress at the door of their indolent ruler. Ptolemy Euergetes had boldly countered a previous famine by feeding his subjects at the royal expense: more rashly the son left the matter in the hands of Agathocles, who had seized the office of dioecetes. In vain the starving population, frightened by a succession of low Niles, looked to the government for relief. None was forthcoming: Agathocles refused point-blank to feed the country. Let Egypt fend for herself, was his advice, and Philopator rashly listened to the counsel.

He was soon to regret the weakness. Disorder broke out at a dozen points, and one governor after another begged for troops to suppress it. Too late the king replaced Agathocles with Tlepolemus, a brusque soldier, and to increase the latter's authority handed to him the Great Seal. Unversed in administration and ignorant of the causes of discontent, Tlepolemus could think of no other remedy than savage and vicarious reprisal. It was not always successful, and presently it was clear that the state was confronting widespread insurrection. They were sad days for Egypt: anarchy was spreading up and down the Nile, and the dynasty tottering to its foundations. Fortunately for the throne Alexandria remained calm. There was no reason indeed why the capital should lose its head, since with greater sagacity Tlepolemus fed the citizens, while he went on with his primitive methods in the country. There disorder had assumed a national air. Local leaders had come forward, mostly ex-officers of the army, disappointed with their reward after Raphia. That battle, indeed, had excited hopes that the king's advisers had not foreseen. Egypt confidently believed that victory had been due to the

valour of the native officer and his levies and not to the mercenary troops, and that the claims of the leaders of the first to advancement had been deliberately overlooked. The conviction was no doubt genuine, but the true cause of disorder lay more probably in the aggravated abuse of government. Bad enough in the two preceding reigns, it was worse now. To the innumerable monopolies and taxes established by Apollonius, so many others had been added by Philopator under pressure from Sosibius that the wretched cultivator could hardly keep body and soul together. Euergetes' reforms, faint-hearted in conception, had been short-lived, and Philopator did not attempt their resurrection. So long as revenue flowed into the treasury, he was indifferent how it was obtained. The neglect cost his successors dear: a century later insurrection had become endemic in Egypt.

Scholarship under the patronage of a prince of the type of Philopator was hardly likely to flourish, nor did it do so under his reign. Of the men of letters who visited Alexandria at this period, few stayed, fewer still conferred lustre upon the Mouseion and the Library. Eratosthenes, almost alone in his glory, kept the lamps of learning alight, meditating in the hours snatched from research upon the task of differentiating between the claims of the great and humble writers to immortality. A later generation put into execution the thought. Thus came about the institution of the Alexandrian "Canons," or classification of the great poets, historians, orators, philosophers and dramatists of the past. Homer naturally headed the list of heroic poets, and, spurred by Eratosthenes, the king built in Alexandria a shrine in Homer's honour. In its centre he set a statue of the poet, surrounded by seven worshippers representing the seven cities that claimed the honour of his birthplace. That seems to have been his only contribution to culture, and with the dedication of the shrine his interest in scholarship apparently ceased.

The reign ended as it had begun, with a wicked crime. Berenice the queen-mother, Lysimachus her brother, and Magas her younger son, had perished, and the turn of Arsinoë had come. Once the latter had borne an heir, she had performed all that was needed of her, and Agathoclia perhaps counselled the king to rid himself of a wife whose chastity and virtue were a reproach to the court. Alexandria at least believed it was so, and spoke of Philopator as "the benevolent murderer." Sosibius seems to have had no hand in the crime: his interest in the domestic affairs of the palace had disappeared, his attention was focused upon the political

situation in the Aegean. It was far from reassuring. Rome, with victory over Carthage within sight, was considering extension of her empire in the East, Syria and Macedonia were planning partition of Egypt and Pergamum was threatening Athens. If war was to be prevented, the East must reconcile its interests, and Sosibius persuaded Chios and Rhodes to join Egypt in negotiating a general peace. But nothing came of the effort: Macedonia and Syria went on with their plans, and Rome looked coldly on the interference.

Philopator had inherited neither the dignity of the first Ptolemy nor the good looks of the second. A shifty eye excited distrust, an ungainly shamle ridicule, and a bulbous nose and pendulous lip heightened the disagreeable impression. His behaviour in public was no more commendable than in private: he was awkward and inarticulate and at his ease apparently only behind closed doors and in the society of intimates. Had Philopator met with his deserts, the dagger or a draught of poison would have been an appropriate end to his life. But in Alexandria the king's person was sacrosanct, and royal frailties were condoned. As it was, debauchery had ruined Philopator's constitution, and he died in the thirty-ninth year of his age, the victim of his own vices.

PTOLEMY EPIPHANES

203—181 B.C.

PHILOPATOR'S death startled Sosibius and his two confederates: they had not suspected its approach, or taken measures to secure their safety. It was a critical moment for all three: unloosing their tongues, the people of Alexandria openly declared these intimates of the dead king to have been his evil genii. More ominous were whispers concerning the fate of Arsinoë, the sister-wife. Her death was mysterious, and there was talk of demanding an explanation of it. For the royal sister-wife Alexandria had a tender regard: it remembered her spirited conduct at the battle of Raphia, it admired her sober and virtuous life at court. In earlier days Sosibius would have made short work of his adversaries, have silenced by the dagger the tongues of the leaders and broken on the wheel the limbs of their lieutenants. But that was not possible now: he had surrendered the Great Seal to other hands, and without the talisman he was powerless. Timidly he withdrew from the palace to seek inspiration at home. There his resolution returned, there he meditated upon fabricating a will, professing to be Philopator's last wishes, that nominated Sosibius, Agathocles and Agathoclia guardians of the heir Epiphanes, the only child of Philopator and Arsinoë, and regents of the kingdom during the heir's minority. Meanwhile the king's death must remain unknown, and enemies of the three confederates be bribed or frightened into leaving Alexandria. Sosibius divided up the labour: he commissioned Agathocles to remove troublesome adversaries, he undertook himself to produce a will that the sharpest scribe would pass as genuine. Agathocles began with Tlepolemus, the keeper of the Great Seal.

He informed the unsuspecting Tlepolemus of the king's death, repeated the royal wishes, and bade him keep the communication a secret. If the keeper of the Great Seal desired to win fresh laurels as a soldier, he hinted that the opportunity was at hand. The reconquest of Syria had been the king's objective, Tlepolemus the

king's selection as commander-in-chief, and Sosibius allowed the other to understand that the campaign would proceed. Tlepolemus asked no questions: ambitious of winning fresh glory, he restored the Great Seal to Sosibius and set off to Pelusium. The rest was easy. News of the projected operations in Syria was allowed to become public, and a number of men powerful or suspicious enough to challenge the validity of the will were persuaded to undertake various commissions. Scopas, the most dangerous of them, disappeared in the Peloponnese to enlist fresh mercenaries; Philamon became viceroy of Cyrenaica; a certain Ptolemy, governor of Alexandria, headed an embassy to Macedonia; his brother, a second to Rome. Meanwhile Agathocles and his sister Agathoclia were industriously spreading the report that the king had taken to his bed following a drinking bout heavier than usual, and Sosibius was busy in concocting the false will.

When all was ready heralds ran through the town calling upon Macedonians and Greeks to come to the palace, and listen to a proclamation from the throne.¹ The Great Court was packed with people, the air heavy with gossip. It was rumoured that Tlepolemus had gone to the front, that Sosibius held the Great Seal: but no whisper of the king's death had yet escaped. The chatter stopped as Agathocles mounted a dais. For a moment he stood silent. His lips trembled, his face twitched: he lifted a corner of his purple cloak to wipe away a tear that trickled down his cheek. In faltering words he announced the death of the king and of the queen, he proclaimed a period of general mourning. Then, bending forward, he took from his sister's arms the baby heir. Round the child's forehead he bound the royal diadem, held the little fellow at arm's length for the people to look upon his face, and awaited the customary shout. None was forthcoming: bewildered by the news and uncertain of the truth, the crowd was silent. Hastily the discomfited Agathocles returned to his sister the heir, read the false will, and urged all Macedonians and Greeks to be loyal to the new sovereign and to the regents. Still no one spoke, and Agathocles went on with his programme. He picked up two silver urns, and with one in each hand cried loudly: "These urns contain the ashes of King Ptolemy and the Queen Arsinoë."

It was the end: brother and sister disappeared into the palace, and the assembly broke into groups to discuss the events of the morning. Tongues were again loosed: everyone was asking his neighbour his opinion of the truth of Agathocles' words. Had the

¹ Polybius, bk. xv., para. 26, *et seq.*

king and queen come to their end by a violent or natural death—had Sosibius recovered the Great Seal by fair or by foul means? To these questions there could be no certain answer, and speculation passed to the subject of the regency. A regency, it was admitted, there must be: but was it proper that the royal authority should pass to the hands of a dishonest minister, a loose woman, and a depraved man? The dissatisfaction stopped at words. It was one matter to beard fallen favourites: it was another and more perilous business to provoke regents in possession of the Great Seal. A few citizens travelled secretly to Pelusium to lay their anxiety before Tlepolemus: the majority stayed at home, lest an incautious word should provoke suspicion. They were the wiser. Spies were abroad, and men reported to be critical of the regency received no mercy. Agents of the palace would descend upon the offender, and Agathocles would order the victim to the execution chamber. It would be another reign of terror, and the cautious Alexandrian put his trust in the stupid but popular Tlepolemus. The confidence was not misplaced: Tlepolemus had hardly taken over command before he realized he had been tricked. His anger increased when he heard of the reading of the will: he swore loudly that Sosibius with his confederates had concocted the document, and that he for one would not obey their commands. His fierce words found their way to the palace: but Agathocles let his enemy talk, until Tlepolemus ordered his staff at every meal to drink to the "good fortune of the waiting woman and the sackbut girl." That defiance stirred Agathocles into action. Scopas, no friend of Tlepolemus, was on his way back to Egypt with a large contingent of mercenaries, and Agathocles struck. He proclaimed Tlepolemus to be in league with the national enemy Antiochus III of Syria, he urged Egypt to disown the traitor. It was a bold but ineffective appeal: no Macedonian, Greek, or Egyptian was likely to lift a finger to save Agathocles and his sister. Climax drew near. Encouraged by messages of sympathy and promises of support, Tlepolemus marched on Alexandria. His little force soon swelled into a fair-sized army: isolated garrisons in the Delta joined him, the troops stationed in Alexandria left the capital to meet him. Meanwhile Agathocles and Agathoclia drove distractedly through the town, calling upon citizens to arm themselves in defence of the dynasty. It was to no purpose: if Tlepolemus had designs on the crown, muttered every sober Macedonian, he would make a better ruler at least than that contemptible catamite Agathocles.

Pursued by cries of derision, brother and sister returned to the

palace, and while the first assembled the palace guards, the second fetched from the nursery the young king. Holding up the child Agathocles addressed the ranks. "Take this boy, O Macedonians," he asked, "this little fellow whom his dying father placed in my sister's lap. On you his safety depends." He paused, expecting consent; but no word came from the ranks, and he played his last card. With a voice broken by sobs, he cried: "Tlepolemus has named the hour and day when he will wear the crown, and Critolaus will bear witness to my words." He beckoned to that officer, and bade him speak. But Critolaus was denied the chance: the guards shouted down his words, and Agathocles, burying his face in his hands, ran back to the palace. Meanwhile his partisans were haranguing sullen listeners at each street corner, proclaiming that Tlepolemus intended to starve the capital into submission. The speakers were hissed and pelted. No one believed that Tlepolemus, a general who had fed Alexandria when Agathocles would have let the capital as well as the provinces die of famine, would desire victory at such a price and no one cared what became of Agathocles or of Agathoclia. From the security of the palace, the brother and sister meditated upon reprisals. Danaë, the beloved mother-in-law of Tlepolemus, was torn from the temple of Demeter, dragged unveiled through the streets and cast into prison: Moeragenes, a superior officer of the palace guards, suspected of corresponding with Tlepolemus, was seized, arrested and taken to the torture chamber. There Nicostratus, the head executioner, stripped and pinioned the victim, while the torturers tested their racks and pincers. Only a miracle saved Moeragenes. As Nicostratus cried "Make ready," a messenger summoned him away. He did not return, and one by one his assistants stealthily stole out of the chamber. Of the good fortune the prisoner took advantage. He undid his thongs, scampered upstairs, and flung himself into the arms of his comrades. To them he unfolded his story, and starting to his feet cried: "Now or never, O Macedonians, is the hour to deliver Alexandria from the bloody Agathocles." The cry was taken up and, seizing their pikes, the guards sallied into the town.

It was in an uproar: moved by news of the sacrilegious removal of Danaë from the temple of Demeter, half Alexandria was in the streets crying for vengeance. Imprudently Oenanthe, the mother of Agathocles, left her house to seek safety in the palace: she had hardly closed the door than a hue and cry was raised, and, frightened by pursuit, she slipped into a friendly temple. It was

a poor refuge: in a moment the pursuers had surrounded the sanctuary, howling for Oenante's blood. A few kindly souls of her sex elbowed their way through the crowd, entered the shrine, and strove to comfort the distracted mother prostrate before the altar. Covering her eyes, Oenante waved these sympathizers aside. "Keep off, you monsters: Zeus willing, you too shall taste one day, I believe and hope, the flesh of your own offspring," she screamed, until a palace picquet rescued her. It was the beginning of the end. At dawn next day a savage mob surged into the palace precincts, calling for Agathocles and Agathoclia to come out. It was revolution, and Agathocles steadied himself to meet it. He awoke his sister, bade her dress the boy Epiphanes and follow him through the covered way that connected the palace with the theatre. That way had been designed for an emergency such as this, and the existence of substantial barriers at the two ends and in the middle made its passage difficult to force.

There was no safety within. To the cry of "Show us the king," the guards broke through the first obstacle, and would have burst through the second, had not Agathocles asked for a parley. A bold officer, taking his life in his hand, carried the terms. Agathocles offered to resign his honours and emoluments if his and his sister's lives were spared, and to give up the heir if the guards promised to protect the child. Their commander undertook to fulfil the second condition, but left the first to the people to decide. Sullenly the mob moved off to the Stadium, and the guards followed. A roar of applause heralded their appearance and the din was greater when the boy, seated on a charger, was led to the front. A thousand voices demanded the surrender to the people of those who had injured him and his mother and called upon the little fellow to answer. The child did not understand the question and, frightened by the sea of faces, looked piteously about him. An officer whispered in his ear to nod, and obediently he did so. The arena shook with wild cheering: the king was on the side of the people, and the crowd ran to the palace. The gates were open, the guards still in the stadium. Agathocles, Agathoclia, and Oenante were the first to die—their bodies were torn limb from limb. The bloody work went on, the thirst for vengeance was still unsated. It was a moment when men kill for the sake of killing, when the innocent perish with the guilty. Seeking fresh victims, the mob fell upon the henchmen and servants, until the palace became a shambles, and the gutters ran with blood. Well

might Polybius say of this scene: "The savagery of the Egyptians, when passions are roused, is terrible."¹

A new regency came into existence: to Tlepolemus, the citizens of Alexandria joined Aristomenes, an Acarnanian officer of the bodyguard. It was a good choice, for the second, an honest Greek, had some elementary ideas of administration. Unhappily he was never permitted to practise them: Tlepolemus, suspicious of his co-regent, kept the reigns of government in his own hands. That misfortune would have mattered less had he possessed either the inclination or the skill to drive the chariot of state. But success had turned his head, and this idol of the army and this hero of the mob once he was regent became as idle as Philopator and as savage as Agathocles. He persisted in speaking of himself as the saviour of Egypt: an idle boast, since Alexandria within a few months was fervently praying for his death. His court was soon a scandal. He honoured with his notice only parasites who chanted his praises. To Alexandria there flocked a fresh host of flatterers anxious for money and place, and Tlepolemus welcomed them all. His extravagances emptied the treasury and, deaf to the counsel of his co-regent, he tried to refill it by tightening taxation. It was the last straw. Alexandria had not taken up arms to suffer a second Agathocles, and to avoid a worse fate Tlepolemus retired into private life.

A more promising combination, Aristomenes and Scopas, succeeded: the first had the imagination that marks the administrator, the second the spirit of adventure that distinguishes the soldier. The situation confronting the new regency needed both insight and action to handle successfully: Antiochus III of Syria and Philip V of Macedonia, having come of age, had concocted a plan of robbing Egypt of her territory abroad. The hour was propitious: enfeebled by internal trouble, Egypt was ripe for plucking. Without notice the first cleared the Lebanon of Egyptian garrisons, occupied Palestine, and invested Gaza; the second had recovered the Chersonese, seized Samos, and was raiding Asia Minor. Indignantly Alexandria cried shame upon a government that so tamely accepted defeat, and Aristomenes bade his co-regent recapture the lost territory. With agreeable recollections of Raphia floating across his mind Scopas, a veteran of that battle, marched out of Pelusium in high spirits. It would be a lucrative campaign, and Scopas loved nothing better than money. Another and more

subtle argument perhaps influenced him also: in common with all Greeks, whatever the colour of their politics, he was suspicious of Rome's intentions in the Aegean, and he meant the campaign ahead to signify that one Power at least in that sea had no need of her patronage. Alexandria wholeheartedly approved of the sentiment: in its belief the habit of demanding Roman advice upon Egypt's private business had gone too far, and the snub the Senate had recently administered to an enquiry whether or not Egypt should assist Athens against Macedonia had hardened public opinion. Aristomenes, a Greek of wider vision, did not share the belief: he envisaged on the contrary an inevitable extension of Roman influence in the east, and he believed the future existence of Egypt as a sovereign Power to be dependent upon the patronage of the Roman Senate.

The unexpected arrival in Alexandria of an itinerant commission from Rome led by Aemilius Lepidus to communicate the overthrow of Carthage, to offer the Senate's thanks for Egypt's consistent neutrality during the struggle, and to promise in return their support if Macedonia violated Egyptian territory, further convinced Aristomenes of the righteousness of his own view, and he continued to follow the traditional policy of the dynasty in this respect. Meanwhile Scopas, at the head of 6,000 foot and 500 horse mercenaries he had enlisted in Greece, entered Jerusalem and overran Coelesyria without opposition. It had been precisely the pleasant military promenade that Scopas had anticipated, and he went back to Alexandria to enjoy his triumph. Then followed talk of extending the campaign into Syria, of taking Antiochia, the capital, of recovering the lost cities of Asia Minor. But Scopas knew his business: farther north he flatly refused to advance until he had been reinforced. While Aristomenes was considering ways and means of meeting the demand, news came that Antiochus had left Asia Minor, passed through Syria, and was marching on Palestine. Hurriedly Scopas went back to the front in 198 B.C. to find the two armies facing one another at Panion, the Caesarea Philippi of the New Testament. Superior in numbers, Antiochus outflanked his enemy's wings, drove in the centre, and, seeing the day was lost, Scopas left the field. He fled to Sidon with Antiochus in hot pursuit. Capitulation followed a protracted siege, and Scopas, given parole, returned to Egypt. It was the end of the brilliant empire in Asia won and held with brief intervals by preceding Ptolemies: yet an inevitable conclusion, since geographically Coelesyria is an annexe of Syria and not of Egypt.

Accustomed to ascribe the worst motives to account for defeat in battle, Alexandria accused Scopas of accepting from his adversary a bribe. His notorious cupidity lent colour to the charge; but Scopas, though greedy enough of money, was incapable of betraying his honour as a soldier. More skilfully Aristomenes declared that Scopas' poor generalship had brought about the disaster: had he avoided battle till reinforcements reached him, Egypt would have been spared this shameful reverse. He had always disliked his co-regent, had perpetually disparaged his services, and the moment was ripe to eject him from the regency. In vain Scopas protested against the judgement, in vain he demanded reinstatement. Aristomenes was adamant: Scopas must return to his native land, Aetolia, or live in Egypt as a private citizen. Smothering his anger, Scopas left the palace and sought out his old acquaintances, warning them that Aristomenes designed to seize the throne, and hinting that he, Scopas, would be a more faithful guardian of the child-king. His incautious speech was carried to the regent. An infantry picquet supported by elephants surrounded Scopas' house one morning: the commander entered and informed the owner that his presence was required at the palace. There he was led into the hall of audience, and before a council composed of the "Kinsmen," and an embassy from Aetolia by chance in Alexandria, Aristomenes charged Scopas with sedition. Pronounced guilty, he was taken to prison. It was equivalent to a death sentence: that night he died from poison.

The intrigue left a moral that Aristomenes prudently took to heart: conspiracy, it seemed, was certain to be hatched so long as the regency rested in a single pair of hands. Other reasons influenced that reflection. The cares of government were too heavy for one pair of shoulders to bear. Religious rivalry was reinforcing social discontent: Ptah, god of Memphis, was struggling for supremacy with Amen-Rē, god of Thebes, and their jealous priesthoods were adding fuel to the fire that blazed up and down the valley of the Nile. The confusion affected revenue. Already hit by the loss of tribute from Phoenicia and Palestine, the treasury could no longer balance receipts and expenditure, and Aristomenes, a poor hand at figures, looked about for a new co-regent of experience in finance. His eye fell upon Polycrates of Argos, the viceroy of Cyprus. Under his skilful government Cyprus had prospered exceedingly: not only had the island become self-supporting, but it dispatched from time to time handsome contributions to the Egyptian exchequer. Moreover, Polycrates

had distinguished himself in other fields than administration: he had fought at Raphia, and Aristomenes had a weakness for men who had served with him in that campaign. Of Raphia few survivors remained. The rank and file had long since disappeared: of the leaders Sosibius, Tlepolemus, Echeocrates and Scopas were dead. So Polycrates came to Alexandria and listened to Aristomenes' tale of perplexities. To his mind the remedy was clear enough: conspiracy and discontent must prevail until a king sat on the throne of Egypt. The heir was still (197 B.C.) only thirteen years of age, yet surely old enough to wear a crown and hold a sceptre, argued Polycrates, and Aristomenes accepted the counsel.

The coronation followed traditional Macedonian practice. The army paraded, the prince passed down the ranks, the rank and file elected him as sovereign; the spectators applauded, and saluted the new king as Epiphanes, "the God Manifest." But a ceremony sufficient for simple kings of Macedonia was not enough for the Ptolemies. A hundred years earlier Ptolemy Philadelphus, the great-grandfather of the new king, had organized, at Alexandria, a pompé: with greater vision Aristomenes determined to crown his king at Memphis, and so secure the goodwill of the powerful Egyptian priesthood. To that city, in the autumn, the court moved, while the regent exhorted his ward to suffer patiently the tedious formalities of coronation at the hands of the high priest. There was need of stiffening the candidate for a ceremony that began at dawn with the embrace of the priest of Ptah, and ended at sunset with a pilgrimage to the temple of Isis. In the intervening hours, carried in a shrine overhung with a handsome canopy, preceded by priests bearing the images of symbolic beasts and birds, of the lion, the Sphinx, and the hawk, and followed by the wardrobe, fan and feather-keepers, the king made the circuit of the walls of the city. The tour needed a day to accomplish, for Memphis boasted of a perimeter of fifteen or sixteen miles. Here and there the procession stopped and the king alighted and sacrificed. At the temple of Ptah the halt was longer. Upon the royal head the high priest set the two crowns of Egypt, on the royal forehead he laid the uraeus or cobra, into the royal hand he put the whip and crook of Osiris. The later celebration of a Sed festival, an ancient institution that renewed life and virtue in a Pharaoh, provided the priests with an opportunity of commemorating in stone the coronation of this child, "a king like the Sun, the beloved of Ptah, the god Epiphanes." Written in the same three scripts, this priestly proclamation,

known to posterity as the Rosetta Decree,¹ exceeds in flamboyance and verbosity that of Canopus. It conferred further honours on the king's throne, it enumerated fresh triumphs of the dynasty: in other respects it is identical with Euergetes' decree of Canopus, and the greater notoriety it enjoys is due to the fact that Champollion by its study succeeded in deciphering hieroglyphics.

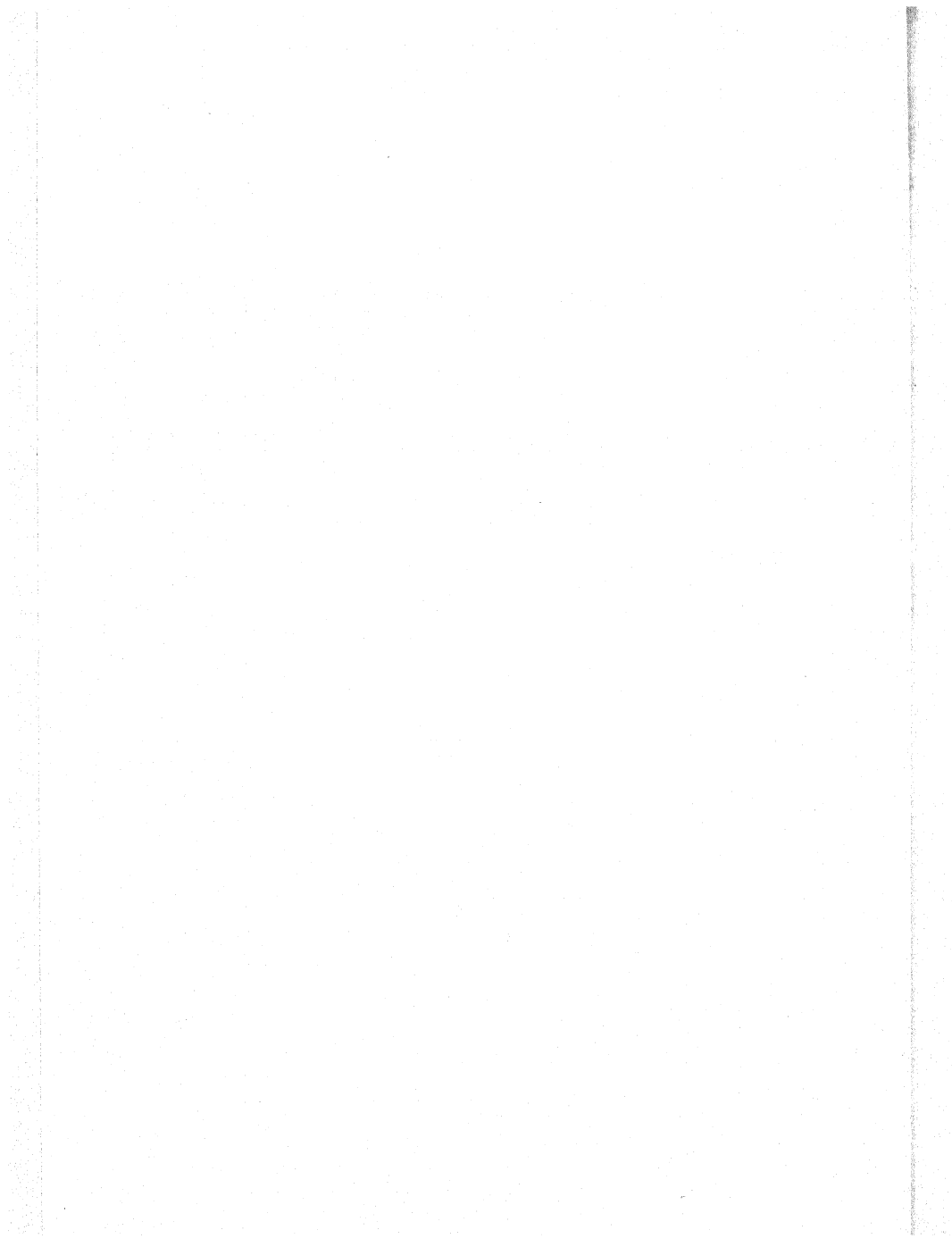
Escaping his mother's melancholy spirit and his father's erotic temperament, Epiphanes grew into a cheerful and boisterous prince who worshipped physical strength, and, marking the instinct, the sagacious Aristomenes encouraged the young king to think of the bull as the symbol of force. It was in his mind to persuade Epiphanes to identify himself with some divinity of ancient Egypt, and he could think of no deity more likely to appeal to the lad than the sacred bull. The difficulty lay in deciding between the claims of the three sacred bulls of Egypt: should the throne associate itself with Mnevis of Heliopolis, with Apis of Memphis, or with the bull of Hermonthis, the modern Armant? In the end Epiphanes went to Hermonthis, and there paid his humble respects to the Bull. It was a wise choice in that it gratified the Thebaid, and gave Aristomenes time to find a bride for Epiphanes. The field of choice was narrow: there was no convenient sister, nor in Egypt even a distant cousin whom the king could have as consort. Thus Aristomenes had to look abroad, and his eye fell upon Syria. Its restless sovereign, Antiochus III, was very willing to oblige: he could indeed at this moment think of nothing more likely to advance his interest than marrying his daughter to the King of Egypt. His own fortunes were prospering none too well. Having cleared Phoenicia of Egyptian garrisons, he was on the point of occupying the coastline of Cilicia when Rome intervened, and the Senate, encouraged by their overthrow of Philip V of Macedonia at Cynoscephalae, ordered Antiochus to restore his prizes of war to Egypt and evacuate all Macedonian territory south of the Hellespont. Antiochus demurred, answering boldly that "Asia was no concern of Rome, that the Senate had no more right to ask what Antiochus was doing in Asia than he to inquire what Rome was doing in Italy." Moreover, he wished the Senate to understand that he was establishing of his own free will friendly relations with Egypt, and was even contemplating "a tie of relationship as well." It was a ruse to gain time. A rumour that the boy Ptolemy was

¹ British Museum: uncovered at Rosetta by a French Artillery officer in 1799. Budge reproduces the text of the decree in *The Rosetta Stone*. London, 1929.



*Ptolemy Epiphanes offering to the Buchis bull
of Hermonthis*

(Museum of Egyptian Antiquities, Cairo)



dead and that Alexandria was on the eve of revolution had come to his ears, and without verifying the gossip he sailed for Egypt. It was an ill-starred adventure. Neither report was true: mutiny delayed the start, storm put an end to the voyage, and the discomfited Antiochus abandoned hope of occupying Egypt.¹ Thus Aristomenes' overtures were welcome enough. To this Antiochus every daughter was a useful pawn.

Of his four girls the eldest was the wife of her brother, the heir to the throne, the second and third wives of the kings of Cappadocia and Pergamum, and the turn of the youngest had now come. He needed sons-in-law. He hurried on the betrothal of his daughter Cleopatra² with Epiphanes of Egypt. He offered as the bride's dowry the revenues of Coelesyria, Phoenicia, Samaria and Judaea. It was a tempting bait, and at Raphia in 192 B.C. the marriage took place. The union was a happy one: bride and bridegroom were a well-matched pair, young, healthy, and high-spirited. But no dynastic marriage could keep the descendants of Alexander's satraps from flying at one another's throats, and in the next generation Egypt was within measurable distance of becoming an annexe of Syria.

Recalled by ominous news, the court went back to Alexandria. Once more disorder had flamed into insurrection: the Delta had become a battlefield, Lycopolis the headquarters of the insurgents, and Polycrates, collecting what troops he could, hurried to invest the town. It was a place difficult to storm by reason of extensive and deep inundations, and reduction was a prolonged business. The siege began with a blockade by land and river in the hope of starving the defenders into submission. But Lycopolis was provisioned for a siege, and Polycrates was forced to change his tactics. Damming at their intakes from the Nile the canals that fed the inundated areas, Polycrates passed his troops dry-shod over them, massed the stormers under shelter of the town walls, and delivered his assault. It was a bloody business that did not even end the campaign. Petty princes from Nubia had penetrated Upper Egypt, new leaders kept the flag of revolt flying in Lower Egypt. Against these enemies Polycrates waged a fresh campaign. The invaders were driven back, the rebels induced to submit in return for a free pardon. It was the king's word, and the victims trusted it. But Polycrates took no risk: a rebel was less dangerous

¹ Livy, bk. xxxiii. 34, 40.

² Usually spoken of as Cleopatra I.

dead than alive, and enticing the ringleaders to Sais he tied their naked bodies to his chariot wheels, and drove at a gallop round the city walls.¹

Epiphanes was not present: perhaps, like Philadelphus, he preferred to repress revolt vicariously, perhaps, like Philopator, he permitted nothing to interfere with his pleasure. His passion was hunting, his daring the talk of the town. Hunting from time immemorial had been a fashionable pursuit in Egypt: the boar, leopard, wild cat and wolf were the customary quarry. At Abydos, in the chapel of Horus, forming part of the temple of Seti, an inscription by certain Gauls of about this period records a fox-hunt. "We, Thoas, Callistratus, Acannon and Apollonius, came and took a fox."² But unhappily Epiphanes would not understand that a sovereign had duties as well as pleasures, and his affection for the chase seriously interfered with the performance of the first. He would disappear on some hunting expedition for weeks at a time, and urgent business of the state had to wait until Epiphanes, tired of pursuing his quarry, returned.

To Aristomenes' remonstrances he turned a deaf ear: when his will was crossed this Ptolemy could be as relentless and vindictive as any of his predecessors, and there came at length a day when Aristomenes trespassed upon the royal patience once too often. The occasion was the reception of a Greek embassy. It was a warm afternoon, the addresses were long, and midway in the proceedings Epiphanes sank into deep slumber. Stepping forward, the impulsive Aristomenes shook the sleeper's shoulder and awoke him. "Treason, treason," muttered the horrified courtiers, and indeed to touch the king's person amounted at the Ptolemaic court to treason. Epiphanes glared at the offender, dismissed the envoys, and withdrew in anger to his private apartments. There he meditated over the punishment of the offender, there he listened to the evil counsel of the offender's enemies. The end of Aristomenes was the common ending of all men who crossed this youthful sovereign, and the aged regent paid for his temerity with life.

Polycrates was more discreet: he had long aspired to become the power behind the throne, and the removal of Aristomenes provided the opportunity. He imitated Sosibius' behaviour to the late king: he professed in turn to admire the wisdom that inspired Epiphanes' lightest word. The flattery told: within a few months

¹ Polybius, bk. xxii., para. 7.

² A. J. Reinach, *Revue des études anciennes*, vol. xiii.

Polycrates was in fact the governor of Egypt. But his ambition was unselfish: it was in his mind to close the breach between throne and people that widened year by year. Egypt was sick, and a physician was needed. He considered the cure. The depleted treasury forbade remission of taxes or abolition of monopolies, and the removal of certain administrative grievances was a safer and more practicable alternative. Complaints of the neglect of irrigation and of calls upon the peasantry for unpaid services were loud and incessant, and from the accession of Philopator a supine government left them unanswered and unrepaired. The instance of irrigation was unpardonable, since the national prosperity depended upon a punctual and adequate delivery of summer water to the land. Sixty days after the first rise of the Nile, the dykes raised at the intakes of canals running east and west were breached, and the flood permitted to pass through the channel until stopped by a transversal dam. When the area thus enclosed had been submerged, the dam was cut and the process repeated, until the canal met the low hills that limit the valley of the river. Later the procedure was reversed: the intakes were closed, the only water then available lay in miniature pools that formed at the tail end of each canal. In the Delta the procedure was identical, except that drains were deeper, canals wider, and the limits of the Delta alone determined the area of the inundated land. At high Nile the country became a vast lake: every village was isolated from its neighbours, communication possible only by means of boat.

Following the harvest, channels had to be cleared of silt, and canals to be retraced at points where the Nile in flood had altered its course. The duty of supervising both operations lay on the state, and either from indolence or from the anarchy that prevailed in most nomes, it had sadly neglected its responsibilities. Unpaid service was a grievance no less substantial. The *corvée* had descended from ancient times, and so long as the right was personal to the king as vice-regent of God on earth, the peasantry willingly gave his labour. Under the late Pharaohs the prerogative was stretched: first the priest, then the official, claimed to share the privilege, and the cultivator was expected to till the fields of the first and entertain the second without payment for either service.¹

Polycrates did not persevere with his experiment: perhaps like

¹ F. Oertel, *Die Liturgie*. Leipzig, 1917.

Euergetes he found administrative reform too difficult, perhaps like Sosibius he discovered in politics a more interesting occupation. His imagination wandered to Egypt's lost empire in Asia, his mind to speculating upon its recovery. He did not share his late co-regent's belief in Rome's unselfishness: on the contrary, he thought that the Senate's occupation of Macedonia and their partition of Syrian territory in Asia Minor demonstrated their intentions, and following the victory of Magnesia in 190 B.C. he had disapproved of congratulating the victor or begging the Senate to accept a gift of a thousand pounds in weight of gold and twenty thousand pounds in silver. The hint was ignored, the gift refused. Of the partition of Syria Pergamum secured the lion's share, Cappadocia the crumbs, and Egypt was left to console herself with Cyprus, already within her sovereignty. It was a bitter disappointment. But Seleucus IV, an indolent and effeminate prince, now reigned in place of Antiochus, and to Polycrates the moment seemed ripe to ignore Rome and to march against Syria. The plan came to nothing. In place of breaking with Rome, Egypt flirted with the anti-Roman party in Greece: in place of campaigning, Epiphanes preferred to hunt. It was a pity: Egypt would have done better to join Macedonia and Syria and so present a united front to the common enemy. At the head of such a combination Ptolemy Epiphanes, king of Egypt, might have won undying glory—he was bold and intelligent, active and healthy: surely a sufficient answer to the physiologist, who maintains that the offspring of a brother and sister marriage can be neither,—and hellenistic history might have been written differently. Once more the opportunity was missed: local jealousy was too strong, and the kingdoms bordering the Aegean lost their independence.

Of this Ptolemy's reign little is known beyond the events of his minority and his marriage: no poet has sung his praises, no historian proclaimed his virtues. He died in 181 B.C. in the twenty-ninth year of his age, and posterity is ignorant of the cause of his death.

CHAPTER VIII

PTOLEMY PHILOMETOR

181—145 B.C.

EGYPT neither contested the necessity of another regency, nor challenged Cleopatra's claim to it. She had been a popular figure as a wife, she was no less so as a widow. A family had been slow in coming, but later she had made amends for the deficiency by bearing three children in quick succession: two boys, Ptolemy Philometor and Ptolemy Euergetes, and a girl known by her mother's name. The birth of the second son encouraged the well-wishers of the dynasty, since it atoned for Philopator's extermination of lineal heirs, and assured the male succession for a generation or two ahead.

If here and there a Macedonian or Greek questioned the wisdom of entrusting the reins of government to a woman, capricious as became her sex, Cleopatra early dispelled doubts of her capacity to rule. Responsibility broadened her mind, reflection widened her outlook, and a discreet resolution distinguished her administration. Justice was less easily bought, the favour of government was less easily obtained, and Egypt responded to the change. Discontent subsided, and trade improved under the rule of this competent regent. Her policy was simple: she designed to close the breach between the throne and the people, to hold a just balance between the claims of the state and the rights of the individual, and finally to live at peace with her neighbours. To accomplish these ends, she needed neither a favourite nor counsellor, and incontinently dismissed from the court her late husband's confidential agent, Polycrates. It was a disagreeable surprise to that sagacious administrator, who had confidently expected a woman regent to strengthen his authority; but Cleopatra was adamant, and Polycrates disappeared.

Relieved of the incubus, Cleopatra considered her programme anew. The base and superstructure were obvious enough to her. Concord at home and peace abroad would be the first, the fusion

of all the inhabitants of Egypt into a united community the second. It was an idea as old as the dynasty. Ptolemy Soter had expected that the creation of his new god Serapis would accomplish the union: Cleopatra had in mind a more subtle expedient. Fusion in Alexandria she put aside as impracticable. Greek culture was the antithesis of Egyptian, and the cry of Alexandrides the philosopher—"between us there can be no communion"—voiced the belief of all Macedonians and Greeks. A more promising field lay in the provinces, where the Greek and the Egyptian had common interests. Of the partnership the second was always the dominating member. Speak Greek in order to conduct his business with the government, he must; but in other respects he imposed his own standards upon the stranger. That was natural enough, since the Greek outside the capital was coming to think of Egypt as his native land. Thus he took Egyptian women to wife, gave his children Egyptian names, ate Egyptian bread kneaded of Indian corn, drank the Egyptian beer brewed from Egyptian barley, swore indifferently by Zeus or Amen-Rē, and worshipped impartially Demeter or Isis. To cement the intimacy Cleopatra encouraged Egyptians to take up land contiguous to areas occupied by retired mercenaries, and permitted the newcomers to bequeath their holdings to descendants. Simultaneously she kept an eye upon the scattered Jewish communities, and found situations hitherto reserved for the privileged Greek at court and in the government for the Egyptian and the Syrian.

Wild talk of war, a legacy of Ptolemy, interrupted the execution of Cleopatra's programme. Confusion in Syria had followed the accession of the feeble Seleucus IV to the throne, and, thinking the moment favourable to regain possession of Coele Syria, Alexandria urged Cleopatra to declare war. The advice did not move the regent. As dowry she enjoyed the revenues of that province, and she declined to jeopardize her private fortune or her heirs' inheritance of it in a doubtful adventure. Moreover, she disapproved of war undertaken in a spirit of revenge, when the issue must be uncertain and the cost incalculable. None the less, it was difficult to maintain peace when one country panted to wipe out memory of a defeat and the other cried shame on its sovereign, too timid to take up a challenge. Cleopatra's situation became the more embarrassing when Seleucus died by the dagger, and a brother Antiochus IV, disregarding the rights of the legitimate heir Demetrius Soter, his nephew, seized the throne in 176 B.C.

That event persuaded Cleopatra to hasten the coronation of

the heir Philometor. He was still only a boy of sixteen or seventeen years of age: but his father had been crowned even younger, and Cleopatra believed the dynasty would be safe if a king sat on the throne. She knew the tempestuous ambition of her brother Antiochus IV, and she felt uncertain of her capacity to avert war. So in 173 B.C. Ptolemy Philometor became king. The ceremony followed procedure prescribed by convention. In Alexandria the Macedonian bodyguard acclaimed the election, in Memphis the Egyptian priesthood confirmed it, and the marriage of the young sovereign with his sister Cleopatra¹ followed in obedience to Egyptian tradition. It was the last public act of the mother: her death followed within a few months. But if upon the administration she left no permanent mark, at least in the history of the Ptolemies the first of the seven Cleopatras of Egypt deserves to be remembered as a wise and benevolent queen, and a regent who gave the dynasty a fresh lease of life, even if she did not complete her programme.

The three children deplored their mother's death: the young king and queen spoke thenceforth of themselves as Philometores, or the mother-loving gods, and to her memory raised a handsome temple in Ptolemais, that agreeable foundation of the first Ptolemy. It was an offering the dead woman richly deserved: she had been a virtuous wife and a good parent, and Philometor in particular had profited from her example. An intelligent if not intellectual prince, his patronage of letters recalled that of earlier Ptolemies. Under his auspices, the declining fortunes of the Mouseion revived. It was the age of criticism and discussion of texts, of which Aristophanes of Byzantium was the pioneer and Aristarchus of Samothrace² a follower. Both men were distinguished teachers, but of the pair, Aristophanes' claim to notice is the more insistent, since to him posterity appears to owe the introduction of accents and punctuation in Greek literature. Contemporary judgement also was harsher of Aristarchus' work, and rivals spoke scornfully of his pupils as "buzzing in corners and busy with monosyllables." Yet Aristarchus got the better of his detractors in the end, for he founded a school of grammarians and critics that outlived them by centuries. But its labours were sterile and its scholarship was unfruitful: instead of critically examining a theme, and estimating its place in the world of literature, the school was content to

¹ Commonly known as Cleopatra II.

² Not to be confused with Aristarchus of Samos, the Alexandrian mathematician, who flourished a century earlier.

indicate errors of grammar and rectify faults of metre. Erudition was its ruin, and the writer of *Ecclesiastes* may well have had in mind the professional grammarian of Alexandria when he proclaimed "much study is a weariness of the flesh."

From that scornful judgement must be excepted the pursuit of science. Hipparchus of Nicaea, the pioneer of mathematical astronomy, flourished in Philometor's reign. Other Greeks, notably Eratosthenes, had computed the position of certain fixed stars: but Hipparchus completed their catalogues, and determined the places of the constellations more accurately. Trigonometry was the corner-stone of his calculations—a science invented by Hipparchus for his purpose, much as Diophantes a hundred years earlier had elaborated a sister-branch of mathematics, algebra. A lesser light was Ctesibius, an Egyptian by birth, who devoted his mechanical talent mainly to the occupation of making toys. The court, no doubt, was highly diverted by inanimate birds that whistled, lifeless figures that walked, and sail-less boats that moved at the will of Ctesibius: yet succeeding generations may well regret that this ingenious mechanic did not put to better use his knowledge of hydrostatics.

To this reign may be ascribed also the translation, if not the writing, of the two Hebrew works of the Books of *Ecclesiastes* and *Ecclesiasticus*. The first presents a mournful picture of Alexandria during the minority of Ptolemy Epiphanes. "Woe to thee, O land, where the king is a child," declaimed the writer, shocked at the infamies he witnessed. His pen was also caustic. "I saw all the oppressions that are done under the sun," he said in one passage: "I saw in the place of judgement that wickedness was there," in a second.¹ If the writer expected to find in Alexandrian philosophy more spiritual ideas than Judaism offered, he was speedily disillusioned. The unprofitable hedonism and cynical paganism of the capital of Egypt were even less to his liking than the fanatical dogma of Judaism. But he seems instead to have returned with relief to the monotheism of his fathers, since he admonishes his co-religionists to "fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man."² Other Jews of the period, teachers rather than critics, burned also to inform the world of the virtue of Hebrew sacred literature. Aristobulus, one of the number, pretended that the philosophers of Greece had drawn their inspiration from the Scriptures: another writer conceived the idea

¹ *Ecclesiastes*, iii. 16.

² *Ibid.*, xii. 13.

of re-editing the Sibylline oracles solely to extol the splendour of Hebrew doctrine.

If Josephus is credited, Cleopatra chose from these Jewish men of letters Aristobulus as tutor of her children, retaining in her own hands instruction of the young king in statecraft. It was from his mother's lips that Philometor had learnt the need of keeping friends with Rome and the wisdom of maintaining peace with Syria. Death must have overtaken Cleopatra suddenly, or surely she would have commended to her son some honest Macedonian as his adviser: as it was, she left the boy to the mercy of the two parasites, eunuchs perhaps, of the palace, Eulaeus and Lenaeus. To consolidate their ascendancy, the pair planned an attack upon Syria. It was a popular and, as always in the belief of Alexandria, an easy adventure. The army spoke of the campaign as a simple promenade and, misled by the enthusiasm of Eulaeus and Lenaeus, it established headquarters in southern Palestine. The advance was equivalent to a declaration of war, and Antiochus IV construed it as such. He seized the revenues of Coelesyria: he declared they had been granted to his sister Cleopatra for life only, and that on death they reverted to Syria. That was an unexpected check, and each court dispatched an embassy to Rome to complain of the other's duplicity. Perplexed by argument and counter-argument, the Senate temporized, instructing Marcus Philippus, an authority upon territory bordering the Aegean, to investigate the dispute. It was a decision that committed Rome to nothing.¹

But Antiochus did not await the inquiry: driving before him the Egyptian forces, he crossed Sinai, invested Pelusium, and offered its defenders terms. The message was very welcome. Bewildered by the enemy's lightning advance, the Egyptian troops had no stomach for fighting, and Eulaeus and Lenaeus equally wanted to get back to Alexandria. Capitulation was made easy: Antiochus demanded no more than possession of the young king's person, in the expectation of presenting Rome with a delicate problem. He proposed to pose as a virtuous uncle, coming to the rescue of a royal nephew, a pawn in the hands of two evil-minded parasites. The Senate in these conditions could hardly deny his right to protect the little Ptolemy or safeguard his throne. But Eulaeus and Lenaeus divined Antiochus' intention: they were to be the scapegoats, Antiochus to be the hero, and, slipping out of Pelusium, they bore the young Philometor off to Alexandria. A wave of anger was

¹ Polybius is the leading authority for this period: bks. 29, 30, 31, 33.

sweeping over the capital: shocked at the fall of Pelusium, the population indignantly accused Lenaeus and Eulaeus of betraying the garrison. To stifle the talk, the two men declared that the young king, terrified by the sights and sounds of battles, had insisted on flight, and to give point to their story, they persuaded him now to fly to Samothrace in the hope of saving the dynasty. Hardly had the reluctant Philometor embarked than an enemy squadron gave chase and towed the prize into Pelusium. There Antiochus royally entertained his nephew and, taking the boy with him, he occupied Memphis.

At Memphis, Antiochus endeavoured to persuade the priests to grant him an Egyptian title of divinity. Since in Syria he was the god Epiphanes, in Egypt he might surely be the son of Amen-Rē. But Memphis did not grant its favours lightly, and Antiochus had to be content with issuing proclamations and decrees under the simple title of "King Antiochus,"¹ with minting currency inscribed with his portrait and the eagle, the conventional symbol of Egyptian sovereignty in this period, with no mention of Ptolemy Philometor. The pretension was dangerous. It irritated Egypt, it angered Rome, and prudence should have warned Antiochus of the peril of provoking both. He was perhaps considering the point, when news that Alexandria had elected Euergetes, the younger brother, as King of Egypt, fired his spirit, and he sailed to Naucratis, in the confident belief that the offenders would ask pardon for the impertinence. That was unlikely since at this moment Euergetes, an arrogant lad, was actually inviting neighbouring states to be represented at his approaching coronation. He would have been better employed in stimulating Alexandria to defend her liberty. A few ill-found triremes, putting to sea, met Antiochus' ships cruising in the offing and surrendered, and, learning of the disaster, volunteers manning the ramparts of Alexandria incontinently forsook their posts. It was soon clear that only Rome could avert the siege and sack of the capital, and Euergetes implored the Senate to intervene.

His ambassadors started too late. Antiochus, with Philometor in his suite, was encamped at Naucratis before Rome knew of the peril, and in despair Euergetes implored certain Achaeans and Athenian delegates by chance in Alexandria to persuade Antiochus to retire. They consented and went to Naucratis. Their pains were wasted: Antiochus cut short their arguments with an ultimatum. In Egypt there could be but one lawful king, and he, Antiochus, his

¹ Tebtunis Papyri, Grenfell-Hunt-Smyly, Oxford, 1902, *et seq.* Vol. iii., Decree No. 698, addressed to the cleruchs of Crocodilopolis.

uncle, was there to support the right of the elder of the two brothers. As for the revenues of Coelesyria, Egypt had better understand once and for all that he did not intend to relinquish them. Yet despite these valiant words he was not easy in mind. Thus far the campaign had prospered: but Antiochus had still to reckon with Rome, and at Naucratis he was in two minds whether to advance or withdraw. The uncertainty grew greater when he lay under the walls of the capital: he neither pressed the siege nor tried to starve the people into submission, and the arrival of a mission of reconciliation from Rhodes provided a reasonable excuse to break off the campaign. Its spokesman talked of the wickedness of war between neighbours and relations, of the folly of provoking the interference of Rome, until roughly Antiochus cried at last: "No need of words. Egypt is the realm of the elder Ptolemy. If Alexandria is willing to receive him, let it say so and I am content." There could be little doubt of the answer. Alexandria would have sacrificed a dozen kings of its choice to escape the horrors of a siege.

But Antiochus' retirement left Egypt a divided kingdom. Euergetes refused to surrender his royal prerogatives, and Philometor, retiring on Memphis, would use no force to make him do so. Thus for some months the younger brother was king in Lower, and the elder king in Upper, Egypt. Alexandria was the court of the first, Memphis of the second. It was the ruin of Egypt's reviving prosperity, and trade between the interior and the capital ceased abruptly. Euergetes was the difficulty. Claiming his election to have been final, he would accept no compromise, listen to no terms. Egypt, in short, might perish before he sacrificed his claim to the throne. Happily, at this critical moment in the history of the dynasty one member of it, Cleopatra II, the sister-wife of the elder brother, kept her senses. She was a shrewd girl, the image of her mother, and a replica in character of Arsinoë, the sister-wife of Ptolemy Philadelphus. It was a laborious business to persuade her brothers to share the throne, but Cleopatra persevered until she achieved her end. She was quite impartial, totally disinterested. The dispute did not affect her own position: whether Philometor or Euergetes triumphed, she as sister-wife must be queen.

Thus began in 169-168 B.C. a triple rule, a mysterious trinity that wrangled and quarrelled throughout its four years' duration. In the beginning, the two kings buried their jealousy in face of a second attack by Antiochus, an enemy common to both, and ignorant of the reconciliation, Antiochus thought the moment

propitious to seize Egypt. Detailing a division to occupy Cyprus, he advanced to Rhino-colura, the modern El-Arish, where an embassy from Alexandria found him. In the name of the gods Philometores the brothers thanked the king of Syria for his former services to Egypt, and asked to be informed of his wishes as an ally and not an enemy. To the message, Antiochus answered bluntly that the gods Philometores could only have his friendship by the cession of Cyprus, Pelusium, and "all territory bordering the Pelusiac mouth of the Nile." It was a critical moment: the Achaean League, a fraternity of Peloponnesian city-states that the Ptolemy dynasty had consistently supported, refused assistance, and Rome made no sign. Anxiety deepened when the enemy, passing through Pelusium, was reported to be again within striking distance of Alexandria. The capital would have abandoned all hope of succour, but for the news that the Senate, shocked by the appearance in Rome of Timotheus, an Egyptian envoy, "dressed in mourning, with hair and beard untrimmed, and carrying in his hand an olive branch," and pleading the cause of Egypt, had nominated Popilius Laenas to "inform first Antiochus and then Ptolemy that the Senate would consider whichever party persisted in the dispute to be neither their friend nor their ally."¹ But Popilius dallied on the way, and despair again settled on Alexandria. Thinking Egypt could await his convenience, in place of steering for Alexandria this eminent Roman sailed to Delos, one base of the Roman armies operating in Macedonia. The war in that theatre was dragging: something was amiss, and Popilius intended to learn the reason. It was not difficult to discover. Disorganization reigned in Delos, and while military and naval commanders were disputing, a Macedonian fleet lay at sea waiting to pounce upon transports. It was, in short, a blockade, and Popilius found himself in its toils. Thus only when the battle of Pydna had been fought (168 B.C.) was he free to perform his original mission, and sail for Egypt. Even then curiosity induced him to touch at Rhodes, and so a voyage that should have taken days extended into months.

None the less, he was in time: a rumour of the Senate's intentions had reached Antiochus, and he had halted at Eleusine within sight of the walls of the capital. Having landed, Popilius was in no hurry: an arrogant Roman, accustomed to think of kings and princes as naughty children, he meant Antiochus to understand

¹ Livy, bk. xlv, ch. 19.

that he was one of the number. Thus he exchanged prolonged greetings with the Alexandrian trinity, and leisurely admired the temples and palaces of the capital, before he took road to Eleusine. There Antiochus impatiently awaited him. The two men looked hard at one another: Antiochus armed to the teeth, fretting and fuming at the delay, Popilius carrying only a light wand, cool and supercilious. Stepping forward, the first offered his hand. Popilius did not take it: slipping his own in the folds of his toga, he bade a colleague give the king the Senate's decree to read. Antiochus glanced at the tablet, and muttered: "I must consult my friends and kinsmen before I reply." Popilius' lips curled, and lifting his wand, he traced in the sand a circle round Antiochus' feet. "Before you step beyond this line, you will give me an answer." The humiliated Antiochus stood a moment irresolute, reluctant to submit, yet not daring to refuse. "I will do as the Senate wishes," he said sulkily at last, and Popilius stretched out his hand.

Popilius had not finished. Returning to Alexandria, he lectured the two young kings upon the impropriety of family quarrels, and recommended both to think more of national than personal ends. Then, sailing to Cyprus, he ordered Antiochus' troops to evacuate the island, and hurried back to Rome. Close on his heels followed fresh embassies from Egypt and Syria. Antiochus indeed was desperately anxious to make peace with the Senate: his own sovereignty was at stake, and he dreaded lest the fate of Perseus, King of Macedonia, should be his.¹ "The king," declared the Syrian spokesman, "thought peace with Rome more agreeable than a victory over Egypt. Accordingly he had obeyed the Senate's decree, as if it had been a mandate of Heaven." That ingenuous apology did not impress the Senate. Convinced that Rome's interest lay in keeping both Egypt and Syria under her heel, they informed Antiochus that he had done well to obey, and advised the trinity of Ptolemies in Alexandria that Rome was pleased to hear her intervention had benefited the dynasty.

¹ Perseus, King of Macedonia, had walked in the triumph of Aemilius Paulus.

CHAPTER IX

PTOLEMY PHILOMETOR

(continued)

THE message disappointed Euergetes: in place of confirming his election as king by the will of the people, the Senate seemed to approve of his brother sharing the throne with him. The situation was certainly perplexing. There was no separation of political responsibility, no division of territorial authority, no distinction in dress. Each jealously maintained his prerogatives, each wore on state occasions the traditional uniform of a Ptolemy sovereign, the Macedonian chlamys or military cloak, the causia or military head-dress—a broad-brimmed hat. Each bound his forehead with the diadem, a plain or lightly jewelled ribbon, and each carried in the right hand a wooden staff that did duty as a sceptre. Each also was addressed as “O King,” and greeted by court and people with a military salute. In these circumstances conspiracy against one or other of the two kings was certain to be hatched. Both brothers, moreover, had their own following. Provincial Egypt stood by the elder of the pair, king by right of primogeniture, Alexandria by the younger sovereign of its election.

Presently the rumour spread through the capital that Philometor meditated the murder of his brother, and a certain Petosarapis, a half breed, called upon the people to depose the fratricide. Into the Stadium there poured one morning the riffraff of the city, shouting for the two kings to appear: the younger to pronounce the indictment, the elder to answer it. It was no moment to stand on ceremony and, hastily robing themselves, the two brothers faced the excited mob. Indignantly Philometor denied the charge, falteringly Euergetes disclaimed knowledge of it. In a flash the whisper passed that Petosarapis had his own design upon the throne, and to the cry “The dynasty is in danger,” the mob set out to find Petosarapis. But that individual had prudently joined outside the city a rabble of discontented troops awaiting orders to sack the royal palace, and at Eleusine Philometor, leading his guards, caught the mutineers. Petosarapis contrived to escape

and make his way into Upper Egypt, but at Panopolis, the modern Akhmim, Philometor cornered the rebel and razed the city to the ground.

Of his brother's absence in Upper Egypt Euergetes took advantage to consolidate his own interests. He protested now that he went about in fear of his life, he begged his partisans to save him from this vindictive brother. He soon had the ear of the capital: he was its chosen king, and it intended to abide by the election. So much was clear to Philometor from the sullen looks that met him on returning to Alexandria. There seemed no room for two kings: either the elder or the younger must disappear. That belief hardly surprised the first. He had shed his illusions, had abandoned hope of softening Euergetes' insensate jealousy, even doubted his brother's denial of knowledge of Petosarapis' conspiracy. The outlook was unpromising: he could think of only two courses. He might withdraw to Memphis, or ask Rome to arbitrate between him and Euergetes. Neither alternative was very inviting. Civil war would follow adoption of the first, dynastic prestige suffer from the second. In the end the latter seemed to the well-meaning Philometor the lesser evil, and he decided to go to Rome.

The moment was not particularly propitious. Empire in the Aegean, it seemed to the Senate, had inconveniences as well as advantages: every harrassed and nervous prince of Asia Minor was hurrying to lay before the Senate a tale of his grievances, and in self-defence Rome had been forced to decree that "No king must set foot on Italian soil, unless invited to do so." Conscious of the injunction, Philometor hoped to evade it by taking passage on a freight ship, and entering Rome attended by "a single eunuch and two slaves." But a hint of the visitor's identity escaped, and Demetrius, a Seleucid prince, one of the many hostages of the Senate in Rome, presently discovered it. The secret was now out, and the Senate, distressed that a distinguished visitor should be so inhospitably treated, offered by way of amends to listen to his complaint. But business of greater importance occupied them, and weeks slipped into months before Philometor procured a hearing. He got nothing for his pains beyond advice to make terms with his brother, and a promise that two Roman commissioners about to visit the Aegean would touch at Alexandria on the way. The Senate, in short, had no intention of supporting the pretensions of either brother: it was the policy of Rome to weaken and not to consolidate dynasties and kingdoms permitted still to exist in the east.

Seeing he had no more to gain, Philometor sailed to Cyprus, and from that refuge marked the disillusion of Alexandria. The prosperity so confidently predicted by Euergetes had not materialized. The business community had not recovered their trade, the court were aghast at the sovereign's executions and confiscations. History was always repeating itself in Alexandria, and the bulk of the population, heartily repenting their support of this vicious prince, habitually spoke of him as Cakergetes, the evil-doer. Tumult broke out, subsided and broke out again: sharp fighting between the palace guards and the mob followed, and Euergetes would have lost his life but for the arrival of the two Roman commissioners. They investigated the dispute between the brothers, they listened to Alexandria's judgement of both, and thinking it impossible to reconcile the pair, they awarded Egypt to the elder, Cyrenaica to the younger. Pursued by the curses of the capital, the second departed for his new dominion, and Philometor transferred his court from Cyprus to Alexandria. But vicissitude had taught Euergetes nothing: hardly had he settled down in Cyrene than he was begging Rome to add Cyprus to his kingdom. He reached Rome at a favourable moment: the Senate were considering the report of their two commissioners. It was condemned as prejudicial to Rome's policy in the Aegean: thanks to its settlement Egypt was again a compact kingdom united under a single sceptre. For the moment nothing could be done but order Philometor to hand over Cyprus to his brother, and Torquatus and Merulla, two senators, were instructed to see that this was done. "Without a war," the Senate had added, but of that admonition Euergetes took no notice. He travelled with the two Romans to Greece, recruited there a number of mercenaries, and would have crossed to Cyprus at the head of his recruits but for the intervention of the legates. That would have been war, and the Senate's instructions were clear on the point: so Euergetes, politely reminded of the fact, sulkily sailed for Libya instead, with Merulla for company, while Torquatus, the other legate, departed for Alexandria. Torquatus' attitude was rather that of a counsellor than of a commissioner, his speech more that of a philosopher than that of an ambassador. He urged Philometor to bear gently with his brother, he spoke of Cyprus as an unimportant possession. Philometor could hardly repress a smile at the simplicity of these Romans: had they never heard that Alexander the Great was accustomed to speak of the island as the key of Egypt—did they not know that Egypt drew her currency mainly from the mints of Paphos, Ra Citium and Salamis? In short, with-

out troops or ships to back his words Torquatus was wasting his breath. Thus Philometor triumphed: a triumph less over an erring brother than over Rome, and Egypt welcomed it as such. At last there seemed to sit on the throne of Egypt a Ptolemy worthy of his ancestors.

Meanwhile, at Paraetionium on the Libyan seashore Merulla could with difficulty restrain the impatient Euergetes from marching on Alexandria. That course, Merulla explained, could only end in Rome withdrawing her patronage: but puzzled himself by Torquatus' silence, he volunteered to discover the cause. He travelled to Alexandria, but could not break the deadlock, and the two legates were at a loss what next to do, when Cyrenaica rescued them from the perplexity. That kingdom had burst into revolt, and Euergetes marched to repress it. It was a long business: rebellion spread until every town and village of the Pentapolis was in arms, and Euergetes spent weary years in reducing it.

While Euergetes had had his hands full in Cyrenaica, Philometor had spent the years happily enough in the company of his devoted wife and family. They were a pair whose mutual love vicissitude and separation had fortified. Four children had been born to them: two sons, Eupator and Neus Philopator, and two girls, each a Cleopatra, and in watching over their education Philometor spent his leisure. It was not his only occupation: for this Ptolemy believed that a king's first duty was to his subjects, that their welfare must be the paramount objective of a throne. His interest was catholic: he drew no distinction between the rich and the poor, the educated and the ignorant. It was his habit to study problems of government from his own angle, and having found the solutions, to apply them. To this end he inspected from time to time his kingdom from sea to cataract, listened to complaints, investigated grievances. Memphis he constantly visited, sometimes in state, sometimes privately. Petitions showered upon him on these occasions, and Philometor seems to have read and answered all. Many emanated from the army of priests and acolytes established in the ancient capital of Egypt. The lower orders had plenty to report to the discredit of the higher, and the latter to that of the antigrapheus or auditors, highly unpopular people appointed by the government to verify the temple accounts. Their habit of surcharging the priesthood with expenditure improperly debited to crown revenue irritated the victims beyond endurance.

Particularly was this so concerning the administration of the

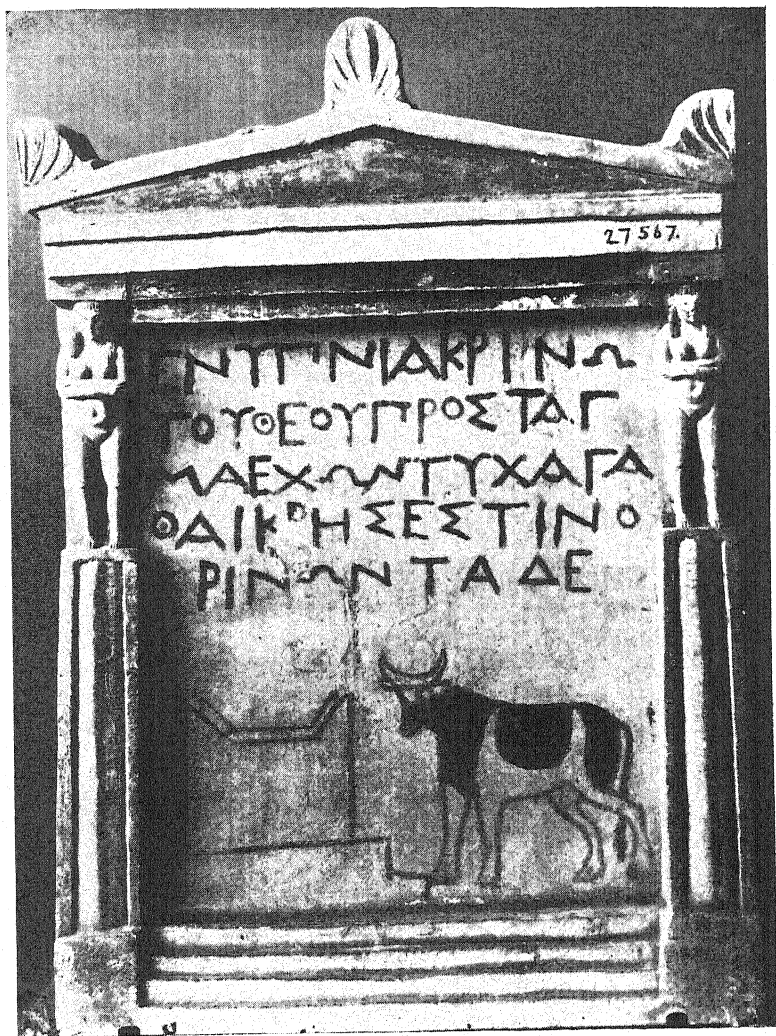
great Serapeum and the many chapels and shrines that clustered round it. Its precincts had swollen into a thriving town that batted upon the sick and healthy, the pious and worldly alike. There the halt and the maimed awaited a cure from the divine Imhotep, the god of healing; there the man of affairs stayed to consult the fashionable oracle of the day; there the commission agent installed his office, the craftsman his shop, the interpreter his booth. The services of the last were continually in request: he was usually a persuasive fellow, who professed his capacity to interpret any oracle's answer, however obscure, and explain any dream, however confused. Modesty was no part of his equipment. "I interpret dreams," one of these charlatans inscribed on his signboard, "having been ordered to do so by the god. Good luck. This interpreter is a Cretan."¹ Too often the inquirer, indeed, had little return for the pains of a visit to the oracle. "You yourself speak nothing but lies," wrote Apollonius, an angry correspondent, to his friend, a recluse in the temples of the Serapeum, whose offence presumably had been the recommendation of a certain oracle. "And your gods likewise," he added sulkily to heighten the rebuke. "Never," he concluded, "can I hold up my head again from shame that we have given ourselves away, being misled by the gods and trust in dreams."² Within the innumerable chapels and shrines lived the catoechi or recluses, men disappointed with the world. Some individuals tired of family life found the peace of the chapel so refreshing that they never returned home. A certain Hephaestion was one such defaulter, and Isias his wife complained, and not unreasonably, of his behaviour. It was shameful. Without even a good-bye he had gone off to the Serapeum, without a word he had left the sanctuary and disappeared. No wonder that Isias felt ill-treated. "While you were at home," she wrote, on the chance her appeal might find him, "I went short altogether, thinking on your return I should obtain relief. But you—you have never thought of coming back, nor spared a glance at our helpless state."³

There were girls also, the hierodules or handmaidens attached to the chapels, employed in offering the daily libation to the god or in some other humble capacity. Of the number were Thanos and Thaus, the oppressed Twins of Memphis, daughters of a

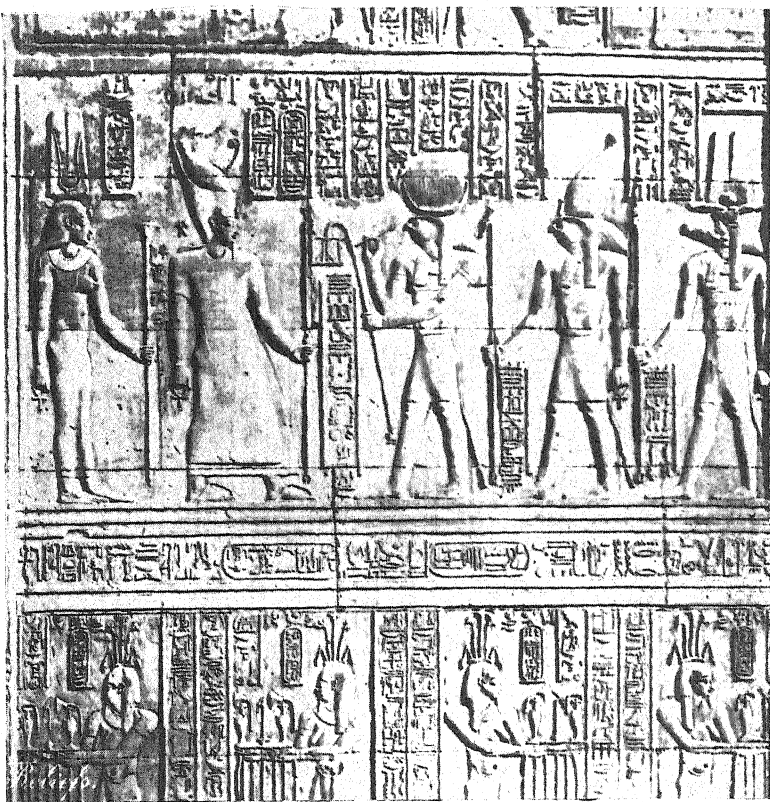
¹ Exhibit No. 27,567, Cairo Museum.

² Select Papyri, No. 100, Hunt & Edgar, London.

³ British Museum Papyrus, No. 42.



Signboard of an Interpreter of Dreams at the Serapeum
 (Museum of Egyptian Antiquities, Cairo)



*Ptolemy Philometor and Cleopatra II, his sister-wife, before
Khons, who inscribes the king's name on a palm-branch*

(Temple of Kom Ombo)

runaway father and a disreputable mother, who found an honourable champion in Ptolemy, son of Glaucus. A dream had informed him of their arrival in Memphis. Thoth, scribe of Osiris, had appeared to him asleep, whispering "I have conducted these twins to you," and at the words Ptolemy awoke. He fell on his knees and prayed to Isis. "Come," he cried, "goddess of the gods, and show thyself to these twins. Me with my grey hair thou hast absolved: but these are women, and if they are defiled, they shall never again be pure." His anxiety was not without cause: too often the unfortunate little hierodule became a temple prostitute, exploited by the avaricious priest.

This Ptolemy, a champion of lost causes, had long been a thorn in the side of Serapeum authority: from his love of argument and his habit of fathering other people's grievances he had in fact become an intolerable nuisance, and unhappily the hierarchy had no means of ridding themselves of the man. He knew his rights: only death could remove a catoechus from the Serapeum, and Ptolemy had no intention of dying. Moreover, in the little company of recluses he was popular and his services were constantly in demand. It might well be so: for the composition and phraseology of any petition he drafted excited respectful admiration from even the learned hierarchy whose sins and omissions he so faithfully recorded. In fact, it was through one of Ptolemy's petitions addressed to "King Philometor, Cleopatra the Sister, the gods Philometores," that the plight of the Twins of the Serapeum became known.

In the beginning the twins lodged in a small temple dedicated to Isis, and there they might have fared worse. The emoluments of their office no doubt were modest, only a gallon or so of oil a month and a daily ration of bread: but duty was light, being no more than the offering of libations to Isis at dawn and sunset, and, aided by the gossip of visitors, time passed pleasantly. All went well for the first few months, then some mysterious accident happened. The bread ration was halved, the oil issue ceased, and the twins had either to beg from their neighbours or go supperless to bed. They appealed to Ptolemy, son of Glaucus, who visited them and, moved by their piteous tale, addressed a petition to the king. It never came to hand. Philometor had moved his court the day before and Ptolemy was forced to await the king's return. A second letter met with better fortune: Philometor read it, and ordered Asclepiades, the epistates or controller of the Serapeum, to report upon the facts. Asclepiades noted the royal command,

passed the document to his deputy Sarapion, who transmitted it to Dorion, the chief accountant. Some weeks later the file returned to the epistates: the temple authority was wrong, the twins had been defrauded of their rights. It might be thought that the incident must end there; but such belief would indicate an imperfect knowledge of Ptolemaic bureaucracy, and the trouble in fact was only beginning. The dossier now became a bulky affair, went off on quite a new travel. Memnides, the overseer of supplies, noted the epistates' instructions to adjust the matter, and through a multitude of new channels the file passed, until it fell into the hands of Theon, in charge of rations. Unhappily this Egyptian disliked all Greeks on principle, and the paper lay neglected on his table till a sharp reminder from Memnides arrived and Theon dared delay no longer. But being in no wise prepared to admit his department was at fault, he invited the twins to compromise. Bygones in his judgment must be bygones: let the two girls abandon their claim to the issue of the arrears of oil, and Theon would undertake to provide rations as before. That was his final offer, and when the twins incontinently rejected it, Theon seems to have washed his hands of the business. But at this point the papyrus annoyingly breaks off,¹ and posterity will never know if the virtuous twins or the wicked Theon triumphed.

Philometor's simplicity won the heart of all the countryside, and of the dynasty he seems to have been one of the few members who actively interested himself in the welfare of his more humble subjects. He was a human and popular figure in the provinces, as inscriptions on temple walls indicate. Thus following a royal visit to Kom-Ombo "the infantry, cavalry and other troops stationed in the nome" record on the temple wall their thanks to "King Ptolemy, Queen Cleopatra the Sister, Gods Philometores" and to the gods of the nome for their care of them. Extending his tour to the First Cataract, he reviewed the frontier garrison stationed in the Parembolē, and dedicated a temple to Isis and Serapis. It was a temptation this Ptolemy could seldom resist. Wherever he halted in his progress up the river, he raised a shrine: at Antaeopolis (Abu Tig) to Antaeus, at Kom-Ombo to Aroëris and Suchos, at Philae to Hathor-Aphrodite. History credits him with no dramatic reform, but at least Philometor looked alike upon all dwellers in his

¹ Kenyon, *Greek Papyri in the British Museum*, states in the Introduction that the story has been put together from thirteen Papyri in the British Museum, ten in the Paris collection, four in the Leyden collection and two in the Vatican.

dominion, Egyptians, Greeks, Asiatics and Jews. For the Jews he seems to have had a particular regard: their leaders had stood by him throughout his quarrel with Euergetes, and Philometor was no sovereign to forget an obligation. Thus when Onias, son of the High Priest of Jerusalem and a refugee in Egypt, quoting the words of Isaiah: "There shall be an altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt"¹ petitioned the king for leave to build a temple to Jahveh, Philometor bade him do so at Leontopolis, a deserted shrine in the Heliopolitan nome, the home of the Egyptian goddess Pasht. The privilege perhaps persuaded the Judaeans and Samaritans of Alexandria to beg the king to decide the dispute that was splitting the community. It was an ancient controversy, centering upon the interpretation of Moses' instructions concerning the site of the Great Temple. Was the shrine to be built in Jerusalem, or on Gerizim? Disputants nominated their spokesman, the king and his council and "kinsmen" listened patiently to the pleadings. Each party rested its argument upon tradition. But out of the confusion this fact alone became clear: that the temple had been standing in Jerusalem for many centuries.² It was an argument that appealed to the king's practical mind, and he decided against the Samaritans. The judgement was worthy of Solomon.

The safety of Cyprus was Philometor's solitary anxiety during these tranquil years. Two princes were casting covetous eyes upon the island: Euergetes, his brother, from Cyrene, and Demetrius from Syria. Of the pair, the first was the more formidable, and Philometor's concern became greater when he learnt that his brother had gone to Rome, urging the Senate to fulfil their promise to add Cyprus to his dominion. Unashamedly Euergetes exposed to Roman eyes his scarred body, pretending that he had escaped death by a miracle from an assassin hired by Philometor, and begged for the loan of a legion and a squadron to support his occupation of the island. But the Senate would only give the adventure their blessing, and for troops and ships left Euergetes to fend for himself. So in 154 B.C. he descended upon Cyprus seized the chief towns, and described himself as king of the island. It was a short-lived dominion: Philometor had not been idle. Covered by a powerful squadron, he landed at Salamis, pinned his brother into Lapitho, and forced him to capitulate. If any

¹ Isaiah, ch. xix., v. 19.

² Josephus, *Antiquities*, bk. xiii., ch. 3.

Ptolemy deserved death, it was this implacable enemy. But Philometor was a magnanimous man: he forgave his brother, reinstated him in Cyrene, and promised him the hand of his daughter Cleopatra in marriage.

Elated by the success, Philometor bethought himself of punishing the second offender, Demetrius. He was seeking a reasonable excuse when the kings of Pergamum and Cappadocia urged him to support the claim of Alexander Balas, a young and handsome adventurer, who purported to be a son-in-law of Antiochus IV, to the kingdom of Syria. The invitation suited Philometor very well: it offered a chance of regaining Coelesyria, and the temptation was too strong to resist. The campaign opened promisingly. He landed at Ptolemais (the modern Acre); Phoenicia received him warmly, and Alexander Balas hinted at other reward. Moreover, Demetrius was unpopular, and, tired of this capricious and dissolute sovereign, the people of Antiochia, who shared with Alexandria the dangerous habit of making and unmaking kings, rose in their wrath and slew Demetrius. Once on the throne, Alexander Balas looked about for a wife to consolidate his tenure of it, and his thought strayed to Egypt. Its king had two marriageable daughters, and of the pair one certainly must be free.¹ Negotiations began, and Philometor, with his eye upon Coelesyria, consented. Cleopatra, known as Cleopatra Thea, came up from Egypt, and at Ptolemais in 150 B.C. her marriage with Alexander took place. Nothing was said of the burning question of Coelesyria, and Philometor, feeling he had been tricked, returned to Alexandria with disagreeable memories of Ptolemais. He was back again very shortly in answer to an appeal from his new son-in-law. Demetrius II, a youthful son of the murdered king, was in the field and, doubtful of the loyalty of Antiochia, Alexander Balas implored Philometor's assistance. But at Ptolemais the sovereign of Egypt nearly lost his life: an assassin aimed a dagger-thrust at him, and under torture confessed that Ammonius the vizier was his employer. It was no doubt true: Ammonius, thinking the experienced Philometor a more dangerous enemy to Syria than the boy Demetrius II, wished to remove the first. Indignantly Philometor demanded the surrender of the vizier: obstinately Alexander Balas refused the request. It was the end of their relations: bidding his daughter join him at Ptolemais, Philometor opened negotiations with the enemy, and moved on Antiochia.

¹ It is unknown whether the elder girl, already betrothed to her uncle Euergetes, or the younger became the wife of Alexander Balas.

The Syrian capital had no intention of defending Alexander Balas, an upstart king whom it despised, or Ammonius, a tyrannical vizier whom it hated. The second was barbarously slain, and the first would have shared Ammonius' fate had he not fled into Cilicia. But Antiochia by now had had enough of the Seleucid family: a new Demetrius would be no better than the old, and if a king there must be, the citizens clamoured for a prince of foreign blood. Their choice fell upon Philometor, but to the credit of this Ptolemy he resisted the temptation. Coelesyria was one matter, Syria proper another. From a union of Egypt and Syria one result only could follow: Rome would interfere, and appoint proconsuls to each. So he convoked the people of Antiochia, and acknowledged the compliment they had paid him: but since he believed one diadem to be enough for one king, he recommended to their notice his new son-in-law Demetrius II. To him he had transferred, as Syria must know, his daughter Cleopatra, once the wife of Alexander Balas. But the last was not yet done with: issuing out of Syria, he insolently advanced upon Antiochia. To meet the threat, Philometor and Demetrius camped their combined forces on the banks of the Oenoparas. There battle was joined in 145 B.C.; there Philometor, thrown from his charger, lost his life in the forty-first year of his age.

Philometor was a king of sharp contrast: frank and deceitful, magnanimous and mean, turn and turn about. Polybius summed up this Ptolemy as "a man who, according to some, deserved great praise and abiding remembrance, according to others, the reverse." Then, thinking perhaps that judgement a little indefinite, he added with a certain cynicism: "He never put any of his own friends to death on any charge whatever."¹ As much could hardly be said of any other member of the dynasty.

¹ Polybius, bk. xxxix., ch. 18.

CHAPTER X

PTOLEMY EUERGETES II

169-8 to 163 B.C.	..	<i>Egypt.</i>
163 to 145 B.C.	..	<i>Cyrenaica.</i>
145 to 116 B.C.	..	<i>Egypt.</i>

PARTISANS hurried to Cyrene to inform Euergetes of his brother's death.¹ It was welcome news: once again the throne of Egypt was within his grasp. Exile had not chastened his nature or softened his heart, and he meditated revenge. Rome was beyond his reach, but his sister and her supporters should feel the weight of his hand. Cleopatra's cause was already lost: as Euergetes entered Alexandria its fickle people were shouting his name, and the troops joined in the clamour. Soon the capital was like a city of the dead, the air heavy with sobs and lamentations.

Descending upon the Jewish quarter, the mob were consuming Euergetes' vengeance; maiming and killing its inhabitants, without regard to sex or age, until the streets ran red with blood. Looking on approvingly, Euergetes would have urged his savage followers to treat the Macedonian community similarly, had not exile taught this ruthless prince the virtue of caution. Macedonians were dangerous men to provoke, and Euergetes, uncertain of his own strength, preferred to leave them alone. He proclaimed his desire to let bygones be bygones, he permitted the palace guards to join his sister in Memphis, where Cleopatra, slipping out of Alexandria, had established a court. It was an astute move. In her company was her little son Neus Philopator and an unmarried daughter, and she hoped in the name of these children to rally Upper Egypt to her cause. Thus history was repeating itself: Egypt was split into two kingdoms with little prospect of re-union.

Cleopatra's affection for Euergetes had long since passed into indifference, and Rome's acknowledgment of her joint sovereignty with Philometor stiffened her pride. The Senate's admission had been handsome. To please his sister-wife Philometor had corresponded habitually with Rome under their two names, and the Senate had graciously addressed their replies "To the Kings of Egypt, King Ptolemy, and Queen Cleopatra." It even surprised

¹ Justin, bk. xxxviii., 8. 2.

her that Euergetes did not grasp the implication that until the boy Neus Philopator was crowned she must be queen and sole ruler of Egypt. Of her four children Eupator,¹ co-king perhaps with his father according to Ptolemaic practice, was dead, and the younger had become thus the lawful heir to the throne; of the two girls, the elder Cleopatra, once promised to her uncle Euergetes, had found a more brilliant match in Syria, and the younger the mother was keeping for Neus Philopator.

All this was clear enough to Euergetes: either he must persuade or force his sister to abate her pretensions, or be content for a time to rule only in Alexandria. Persuasion he ruled out as impossible. Upon this obstinate woman appeal was wasted, and he considered the use of force. Scruples on that point he had none: but he counted up the hazards of war, and he hesitated to embark on them. The troops in Alexandria had thrown in their lot with him, but their two Jewish generals, Onias and Dositheus, had made good their escape, and were bribing units of Philometor's army, straggling home from Syria, to the queen's party. Lack of money forbade Euergetes to compete in this traffic. His sister had carried off to Memphis the contents of the treasury and his confiscation of private fortunes had gone in rewarding his partisans. Nor was this all: from Ptolemais, midway between Memphis and Thebes, came the disconcerting news that every ex-mercenary cleruch and his sons were hurrying to aid the queen. The report set Euergetes thinking. If the cleruchs of Ptolemais sided with his sister, their comrades settled in other nomes would probably follow the example. It was certainly a likely contingency: for Ptolemais held among all Macedonian and Greek mercenaries a unique place in their affections, since there Hellenistic ideals and institutions reigned supreme.² Syncretism was unpopular in this settlement; elsewhere Greeks might adore Isis or worship at the shrine of Petesuchos, the crocodile god, but in Ptolemais they clung faithfully to Zeus and Dionysus. It was a walled

¹ Eupator's place in the dynasty is not definitely known. He has been variously described as an elder brother of Philometor, and as a son who outlived his father for some months. The obscurity arises perhaps from careless drafting of documents: Eupator's name alternately precedes and succeeds that of Philometor. Bouché-Leclercq, in vol. ii., *Histoire des Lagides*, discusses Eupator exhaustively. It may also be noted that W. Dittenberger, *Orientalis Graeci Inscriptiones Selectae*, Leipzig, 1903-5, cites six inscriptions that contain Eupator's name (Nos. 110, 121, 125, 137, 168 and 239).

² G. Plaumann, *Ptolemais in Ober Ägypten*, Leipzig, 1910.

town pleasantly sited on the Nile: in Pharaonic days a sacred city, in Ptolemaic dedicated to the cult of the founder of the dynasty. From its situation Ptolemais derived a certain strategic and administrative importance: the city lay within the limits of the Thebaid, a wealthy but turbulent province; military and civil authority had their headquarters there, and a large garrison were in camp without. There the Greek colonist or cleruch lived in comfort. The land needed no reclamation, labour was cheap and plentiful. Life was pleasant enough for these retired mercenaries: Dionysus was a god who satisfied most Greeks and the municipality of Ptolemais maintained a company of actors, musicians, dancers, rhapsodists and playwrights in honour of his divinity. Following a performance the municipality sat to consider award to the performers, and two steles¹ survive to record on one occasion the grant of a crown of ivy to a namesake, apparently a playwright, of the god. Little wonder if one inhabitant of this entertaining town going up the river on business took the opportunity of a halt at Philae to invite the protection of its patron goddess Isis for "his sweet country Ptolemais, the Nile-born sanctuary founded by Soter."² And when Dionysian interest faded, interest in municipal elections occupied its place. Ptolemais was a domestic replica of the Greek city-states, possessing an elected boule, or municipal council, and an ecclesia, or popular assembly, that amended the constitution, appointed magistrates, and nominated eponymous priests without reference to Alexandria or Memphis. Ister, a pupil of Callimachus and a fashionable historian of his day, thought well enough of Ptolemais to write its history in several volumes.

Meanwhile in Rome Cato's fiery counsel *Delenda est Carthago* had borne fruit, and Scipio Aemilianus in 146 B.C. had humbled that implacable enemy to the dust. Carthage was now a Roman province under the proud title of Africa, and the Senate thought to round off the triumph by including Cyrenaica. So to Alexandria there came the Senator Minucius Thermus to sound Euergetes on the point. His attitude was discreet: he professed to be visiting Egypt purely out of curiosity, though a careless word or two indicated that Euergetes might count upon the Senate's support in exchange for the surrender of the province of Cyrenaica. But Euergetes, who had been tricked over Cyprus, suspected another

¹ Exhibits 9270 and 9234, Cairo Museum

² P. Jouguet, *Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique*, xxi. (1897), p. 184.

trap. Would Rome lend him a legion to oust his sister from Memphis, he asked, but on that point Minucius Thermus dared make no promise, and the disappointed Euergetes fell back on a less attractive alternative, marriage with his widowed sister. The proposal tempted Cleopatra. Power had now become her great passion, and to retain it she was ready to sacrifice all else. Life was slipping away: her fortieth birthday was approaching, and her son Neus Philopator would presently be crowned. Then from a reigning queen she would descend to be only the mother of a king, and she could not bear the thought. Thus reasoning, she consented, and became her younger brother's wife within a few months of the elder's death. A brief honeymoon followed up the Nile: the pair marvelled at the glories of Thebes, admired the great temple of Edfu, the creation of the first Euergetes, now approaching completion; then, retracing their steps, established a joint court at Memphis. It could hardly have been a happy union even if it produced an heir: for when the mother was beyond doubt with child, the father killed his little nephew, Neus Philopator, in order to leave the succession clear for his own offspring. No one dared cry shame, and the high priest of Memphis crowned the murderer as King of Egypt.

The court moved to Alexandria, where Nemesis overtook the woman. She had sacrificed herself, and overlooked the crime to no purpose. She was queen indeed: but the dignity was an empty one, since Euergetes wanted neither her counsel nor her society. For the first he held that one authority suited Egypt better than two, for the second he preferred the company of the young to the middle-aged. Irene, a Cyrenaican girl, was the favourite of the moment, and he put to death half a dozen retainers rash enough to speak disrespectfully of his mistress. But he was an inconstant lover, and presently his wandering eye fell upon his brother's unmarried daughter Cleopatra.¹ Her amorous disposition caught her uncle's attention, and he sounded the girl. Cleopatra was very willing to listen, even if he was no figure of romance: corpulent in body and bloated in face, he richly deserved the nickname of Physcon, or Fatty, that the wits of Alexandria gave him. That knowledge did not stop Cleopatra from accepting her uncle's advances. He might be a repulsive lover, but at least he was a king, and few Macedonian princesses asked from marriage more than a partnership in a throne. That was her solitary stipulation, and Euergetes accepted it. The mother was furious at the news:

¹ Commonly known as Cleopatra III.

oblivious of her own shame, she denounced the marriage as incest, and angrily bade Euergetes remember that two queens and one king would make Egypt the laughing-stock of the world. The sarcasm was wasted: the marriage by this time had taken place, and the only concession he would offer the mother was place and precedence in the royal protocol. Thus came about in 143 B.C. a new edition of the triple reign: the rule of "King Ptolemy, Queen Cleopatra the Sister, and Queen Cleopatra the Wife, Gods Euergetai."

Disturbed by Minucius Thermus' report, the Senate desired further information on the subject of Egypt. Throughout the Aegean world nothing but confusion and discord seemed to exist. Kings were perpetually quarrelling with queens, their subjects crying a plague upon both. Syria had split into two realms, Egypt was no less divided, and in 136 B.C. Scipio Aemilianus Africanus, accompanied by two Senators and by Posidonius, the Stoic philosopher, left Rome "to inspect the kingdoms of her allies." Alexandria was the first port of call, and there Euergetes welcomed his distinguished guest.¹ They made an odd pair: in figure and demeanour the antithesis of one another. The visitor, stately, grave, and laconic, looked what he indeed was, an illustrious captain of war: the host, a smirking, garrulous prince, short of inches and so obese that "the longest pair of arms could not clasp his stomach," looked a pantaloon.² Stranger still was the contrast in dress: while Scipio wore a simple toga woven closely enough to hide his limbs, Euergetes affected a fantastic mantle that stretched to the ankles, and a vest fitted with sleeves that fell to the wrists: both garments transparent enough to expose the deformity of his body. In the belief that luxury would impress his guest, the king provided an endless series of banquets, pageants, games and spectacles: but the pains were wasted, and Scipio counted the entertainment as no higher than the amusement of a vain king and a frivolous people. Nor did he like better the parasites of the palace who dogged his footsteps, hoping for the honour of an introduction to the destroyer of Carthage. The temples and buildings pleased him more than the inhabitants. Their setting was incomparable, and art had supplemented the labour of nature. Seaward there soared into the sky the glistening tower of Pharos, landward there gleamed the dark waters of Lake Mareotis. In the Sema

¹ Diodorus, bk. xxxvii.

² Athenaeus, bk. xii, ch. 73

Scipio gazed at the golden coffin of Alexander, a greater commander even than he; at the Arsinoëum he paused to think over the tempestuous career of the brother-loving queen of Egypt. A man of letters himself, he looked forward to visiting the Mouseion and the Library. It was a disappointment: the halls of the first were deserted, the benches of the second empty: terrified by Euergetes' proscriptions and confiscations, professors and students had found a spiritual home elsewhere. Glad to escape the attentions of his host, Scipio went up the Nile, noting the industry of the cultivator, marking the fertility of the soil. Egypt seemed to him to lack nothing to consummate her happiness but good government: but of that inestimable benefit he could detect little trace. The government was idle and corrupt: the peasant was its victim. He went no further than Memphis. Thebes had no message for him: he was a Roman, and his interest did not extend to the past. Before departing for Cyprus, Scipio counselled Euergetes to amend his ways, recommending him to think less of himself and more of his people, and purge the government of its faults.

Had it dared, Alexandria would have given the same advice. It could pardon marriage with a sister, but not with that sister's daughter: it could forgive assassination of a pretender to the throne, but not the murder of a child, the lawful heir. Fresh proscription heightened the king's unpopularity. Still thirsting for blood, Euergetes drew no distinction between friend and foe, and Alexandria implored the gods to deliver it from this incestuous tyrant. The cry seemed answered when Galaestes, an Alexandrian and a fugitive in Greece, was reported to be enrolling mercenaries to support the cause of a boy proclaimed to be a legitimate son of Philometor, and therefore the lawful heir to the throne. But recruits came slowly. Without money or credit Galaestes could only offer prospective reward, and of promises the mercenary was profoundly distrustful. It was unfortunate, since Euergetes was in no position to defend himself. His troops had mutinied: without increased pay and better terms of service they would not fight, and Euergetes could not or would not satisfy the demand. The situation grew critical, and the angry army were on the point of marching against their miserly master, when Hierax, the commander-in-chief, supplied the money needed from his own purse. Galaestes with the young pretender disappeared, and the menace passed. None the less, it was a warning, and Euergetes, always disposed to extremes, reversed his way of rule. Recalling Scipio's

advice, he dropped proscription and confiscation; influenced by Rome's acknowledgement of Judaea's sovereignty, he ceased to persecute the Jewish community. Acute enough to read the signs, he scented reprisals. A new power, the Maccabees, had arisen in Judaea, and he trembled lest this formidable family took up the cause of the co-religionists in Egypt. A convenient instrument was in their hands, since it needed no more than a little judicious discrimination in customs dues to ruin Alexandria's profitable trade with Jerusalem. He corresponded with Rome on the point: he implored the Senate, out of friendship for Egypt, to intervene and urge their friends the Maccabees to admit untaxed into Jerusalem merchandise from Alexandria. Simultaneously, he invited the high priest to co-operate in promoting a friendly understanding between the Sanhedrins of Jerusalem and Alexandria, and to let it be known that the Mouseion and the Library of the second would welcome any Jewish writer. Certainly there was ample room now in both institutions. No distinguished man of letters or of science cared now to pursue his studies in Alexandria. The Mouseion was moribund: Euergetes had cut off supplies, and teachers and pupils went elsewhere for a living. In Pergamum and other courts of Asia they found a more hospitable welcome and Alexandria never contrived to re-establish her former pre-eminence in the world of learning. Thus the Jewish writer who took advantage of Euergetes' invitation profited from his stay in Alexandria. Platonic conceptions were beginning to colour his composition of new, and to enrich his translation of existing, sacred books, and certainly Christian literature would be the poorer without the Book of Wisdom, an exalted imitation of the Song of Solomon, or the history of the Maccabees, two products of Alexandrian Jewry of the period.

Thus passed the first years of this triple reign, a king embarrassed by the presence of two jealous women in a capital that alternately courted and feared him. Egypt prospered no better under the trinity of rulers: tumult and riot officially spoken of as *Amixia* or "savagery" spread over the Valley of the Nile. Still faithful to his new policy of conciliation, Euergetes published a series of decrees or philanthropia promising amnesties, remissions of taxation and so on. But the country was in no mood to listen, and, forced to quell rebellion, Euergetes resorted to arms. Repression was particularly savage in the Thebaid: Hermonthis (the modern Armant) and other towns were stormed, their inhabitants put to the sword. Having sated his passion for slaughter

in Upper, Euergetes turned on Lower Egypt, and Alexandria in particular, so that his name stank in every nostril. A final outrage loosed the passion of the capital. Rounding up the youth of the city, he drew them into the gymnasium and fired the building. Appalled by the holocaust, a savage mob of fathers and brothers rushed to the palace, shouting for the death of the author of this monstrous crime. They were too late. The palace was deserted, the criminal out of their reach: Euergetes had taken ship, and was on the way to Cyprus. With him went his wife Cleopatra III, their five children, and the boy Memphites, his son by Cleopatra II.

There at his leisure he meditated on revenge. He called on Cyrenaica to provide an army, he sent to the Peloponnese for mercenaries, while Alexandria, breathing more freely, was considering the choice of a successor to the throne. Outside the children born in wedlock of Euergetes, now beyond reach in Cyprus, there was no legitimate heir, and of women of legitimate line, only Cleopatra II remained. Apart from her sex, she would have been a popular choice. Egypt entertained a kindly memory of the wife and companion of Philometor, the elder brother, and Alexandria heartily sympathized with her misfortune in being tied to the younger. Too discreet to press her claim, Cleopatra II patiently awaited the decision. Greek prejudice against the rule of a woman was strong, and the difficulty of reconciling sentiment with necessity seemed insuperable, until an ingenious philosopher suggested a dynastic marriage between the queen and the viceroy of Cyrenaica, a bastard son of Euergetes. It was not an ideal solution, since an heir could hardly be expected from the middle-aged Cleopatra II; but it disposed of the deadlock, and Egypt was unaccustomed to think of the future. The matter got no farther than sounding the two parties concerned: a hint of the match escaped to Cyprus, and Euergetes savagely counterstruck in his customary fashion. One more crime meant nothing to this vindictive man: he recalled his son to Cyprus and killed him.¹ The news horrified Alexandria. The citizens broke the images that Euergetes in his vanity had set up in the open spaces of the city, threw the débris into the sea, and prayed Cleopatra II to ascend the throne. She was perhaps foolish to listen: she should have known Euergetes' capacity for revenge better. Her birthday was approaching, and he promised himself to offer a present worthy of the day. That evening a large company supped at the palace and delegations joined the party later to wish Her Majesty life and

¹ Diodorus, bk. xxxiv., ch. 14.

happiness. They had hardly taken their places than two slaves laid at the feet of Cleopatra II a box sent by Euergetes. It was a grim gift. Within were the mangled and dismembered remains of her son Memphites—a Euergetean version of the Passion of Osiris.¹

Cleopatra's single reign lasted only a few months. Age was creeping upon her: the diadem lay heavy on her brow, the sceptre trembled in her grasp. Her mind was still acute, but the will to execute was gone. Petitions were unread, decrees unsigned, and the confusion that pervaded the palace overtook in turn the administration. The queen spoke of herself as Philometor Soteira: though soteira, or saviour, of what, no one of her stoutest supporters could tell. Here and there the priesthood set up inscriptions in her honour addressed to "Queen Cleopatra, the goddess Euergetes": now and again, heartened by the repeal of some obnoxious tax, the people spoke well of the queen. But inscriptions and concessions did not stem the rising tide of discontent. A fresh period of *Amixia* and fresh trouble intervened, and the government was too feeble to crush it. Meanwhile Euergetes was preparing to recover possession of his kingdom. The ground was carefully prepared. From Cyprus a host of agents and spies crept into Alexandria, pouring scorn upon men who submitted so tamely to the rule of a woman. The gibe told, the more so since there was an element of truth in it, and encouraged by the knowledge, Euergetes in 129 B.C. crossed the sea. His troops got a footing in the city, the garrison, taken by surprise, capitulated, and Cleopatra II fled into Syria.

Confusion had again overtaken that kingdom. Philometor's victory at Oenoparas in 145 B.C. had brought no relief. Revolution and schism in Syria was endemic. In Seleucia-in-Pieria, the port of the capital, Demetrius II, son of Demetrius I, held one court, in Antiochia, the capital itself, Antiochus VI, son of Alexander Balas, a second. But Antiochus, like his father, was unpopular and, heading a revolt, Tryphon, a powerful noble, declared himself king. Meanwhile Demetrius II had set out to conquer Parthia, and the task of holding Tryphon in check devolved upon his wife, Cleopatra Thea, daughter of Philometor of Egypt. The task was too great. At the news of the rout of the army and of Demetrius' captivity, Antiochus advanced on Seleucia, and Cleopatra took refuge in Ptolemais (the modern Acre). There she summoned to her side her husband's youthful brother, another Antiochus. That

¹ Justin, bk. xxxviii, ch. 8.

prince was very ready to march against anyone if only he could be sure of his sister-in-law's good faith: were he armed with her money and supported by Egyptian troops, he swore he was a match for a dozen enemies. Marriage in his opinion was the proper solution, and he approached Cleopatra on the point. He pressed his suit skilfully, arguing that Demetrius' captivity was likely to be long, hinting that his brother was about to marry a Parthian princess, until Cleopatra, indignant at the news, consented. The union prospered politically. Syria accepted young Antiochus as king; Rome offered no objection. All in short went well until 130 B.C., when the elated Antiochus marched on to Mesopotamia. The campaign ended in his death, and Demetrius, making good his escape, returned. But Cleopatra refused to join him: perhaps she mourned the death of Antiochus, more probably she would not share the sovereignty with the insignificant Parthian girl her husband had married.

Flying from Egypt, Cleopatra II besought her daughter Thea to forgive Demetrius. The advice was given less out of respect for the sanctity of marriage vows than in the expectation that the grateful Demetrius would assist her return to Egypt. But Thea refused to be reconciled with her former husband, and the mother began a correspondence of her own with the king. In his own interest, she counselled him to invade Egypt: on her word as a queen, she assured her champion that Egypt would welcome him as a deliverer. The hook was well baited, and Demetrius swallowed it. He moved through Phoenicia and Sinai, and summoned Pelusium to capitulate. But Cleopatra II had misled him: Pelusium would not parley with him, and Egypt wanted no saviour of Seleucid blood. Ominous reports from the rear increased his uneasiness: Antiochia was corresponding with Euergetes, and begging him to replace its king by a prince of his own choice. His vanity was flattered, and at one moment he thought of suggesting his own candidature. Further reflection made him hesitate: Antiochia was as fickle as Alexandria, and Euergetes was too cautious now to put his head into a noose. So a youth of Alexandria, posing as a younger son of Alexander Balas, went in place and Syria accepted him. Meanwhile Demetrius, hurrying back to defend his patrimony, arrived too late. Driven from one stronghold to another, he was a fugitive. Even Tyre failed him and there in 126 B.C. the pursuers found and slew him. The pretender was next to go, and Cleopatra Thea assumed the diadem, calling herself "Queen Cleopatra, Goddess of Plenty." Certainly the

epithet was well chosen, if it referred to her stormy life, for her vindictive and jealous spirit matched that of her uncle Euergetes. But the end of this vindictive woman was approaching. Seleucus, her eldest son by Demetrius, died for speaking carelessly of himself as king, and only a miracle saved the younger from the same fate. His suspicions were aroused: he forced his mother to drink the cup of wine she offered him. It was poisoned, and thus the tempestuous Thea came to her end.

Thinking his sister Cleopatra II a greater danger in Syria than Egypt, Euergetes patched up a reconciliation, and re-established once more the triple rule in 124 B.C.. If inscriptions and reliefs paint a true picture, the trinity thenceforth buried their differences. On Cos a stele records that "King Ptolemy, Queen Cleopatra the Sister, and Queen Cleopatra the Wife have honoured Hieron, tutor of the royal family, with a gold crown and statue"¹: at Komombo a relief exhibits brother, sister and wife in the act of receiving gifts from the hand of Horus. Perhaps Euergetes had mellowed with years, perhaps an itch for authorship had overtaken him. Like most royal writers, he was convinced that the world would profit from his knowledge. The belief was stronger than his technique. His *memorabilia*, or commentaries, in twenty-four massive volumes, a jumble of personal experiences and snippets of natural history, seem poor literature, if the passages preserved by Athenaeus are fair specimens. None the less these *memorabilia* gave Alexandrian culture a new lease of life. Encouraged by the example, students again flocked to the Library, writing with such industry that the royal stationers could not meet the demand for papyrus, and Euergetes had to forbid its export. Pergamum expostulated bitterly, but to no purpose, since Euergetes was the last prince to enrich any neighbour's passion for culture at the expense of his own. Geography also came within the purview of this Ptolemy. In the composition of his *memorabilia*, he had been struck by the little he knew of the world beyond the Straits of Bab-el-Mandeb. Exploration of the ocean beyond had stopped with Nearchus' voyage from the Indus to the Persian Gulf, and no one had yet ventured to complete the story, until Eudoxus of Cyzicus, the explorer and navigator, came to Alexandria in the hope of enlisting the king's patronage. It was in the mind of this mariner to discover a sea route to India, a country hitherto believed to be unapproachable, except by way of the Euphrates and the Persian Gulf. The adventure attracted Euergetes: he provided

¹ W. Dittenberger, *loc. cit.*

ships, and bestowed on the expedition his blessing. So Eudoxus set off, passed through the Straits, and in course of time returned to Egypt, vowing that he had sighted India. The claim is doubtful: more probably, losing his bearings, he had confused India with the modern Somaliland.

Pursuit of knowledge and patronage of letters seems to have provoked in Euergetes a change of spirit: a mysterious transformation, inexplicable except on some such hypothesis. From a capricious tyrant he developed into a benevolent autocrat, from a rake into a virtuous man. The welfare of his subjects henceforth occupied his thoughts, the eradication of abuses of government held his attention. It was a new sensation, and this elderly voluptuary revelled in it. Inherited instincts helped him in the task: every Ptolemy had thought himself an incomparable administrator and Euergetes respected the family tradition. Certainly his opening move was astute: the issue of a proclamation in the names of "King Ptolemy, Queen Cleopatra the Sister, and Queen Cleopatra the Wife," inviting Egypt to bury the past. It was in fact a generous amnesty, whereunder a united throne pardoned "their subjects for the errors, crimes, accusations, condemnations, and charges of all kinds except wilful murder and sacrilege," and further decreed "that persons in hiding on account of theft or offences may return to their homes, and resume their occupations, and their remaining property shall not be sold."¹

The turn of the law-abiding citizen came next. His arrears of taxation "in corn and money" were forgiven, his merchandise was no longer to be at the mercy of an arbitrary customs-house, nor was it to pay customs dues "from one tongue of land to another"—an odious state monopoly, in excess of the lawful charges. Temples earned a special indulgence: in particular "the shrines of Isis, and the feeding places of the ibis and the hawk" in the Arsinoites nome. Their arrears were remitted, and the malpractices of the priests freely forgiven. "No one," announced this indulgence,² "on any pretext, shall take away what has been dedicated to the gods, or apply forcible persuasion to the overseers of sacred revenues." At this point grave doubts of the honesty of the administration overcame Euergetes: "no agent," he curtly reminded officials, "is to collect anything from the cultivator and the taxpayer for the benefit of the police or the agents of the state." Nor were the latter

¹ Tebtunis Papyri, part i., ii., 5.

² Tebtunis Papyri, vol iii., part i., No. 699.

to dispossess the peasant of "crown land by fraud, and farm it at their own choice," neither were they to force him to "work on their own service," or oblige him "to provide geese, birds, wine and corn at a price." It was a timely warning, and authority took subordinates sharply to task for infringing the decree. "You play the fool, Dionysius," once wrote a high official, "at the risk of your own and not of my neck. You seem to have gone mad. If it pleases you to be drunk, you leave out of account the next day."¹

No doubt a peasantry that habitually exaggerated and intrigued were difficult to manage. A village was rarely at peace: each householder carried on a private war against his neighbour. Passion ran high: a trumpety dispute concerning water rights would lead to feud, a feud to murder. The police hopefully left a neighbourhood to settle its own domestic differences, and a village would be decimated before authority intervened. Gossip in the countryside was seldom at a loss for subjects: when talk of agricultural prices palled, the cultivator had a no less agreeable topic in the deceit of the tax-farmer and the tricks of his agent: witness a pathetic letter accusing a certain Artemidorus, appropriately described as "the hated of Heaven," and his colleague Ptolemaeus, of embezzling five artabas of grain laid aside against payment of the tax. Between the individual and the state there existed an implacable animosity, more painful in its consequences to the first than to the second. Despite decrees and rebukes, provincial authority continued to demand unlawful services from the cultivator, and the village that refused them paid for the temerity. The odium as usual fell upon the unfortunate comarch, the modern omda. "You are positively the one and only person who perpetually ignores our pressing comments," wrote the angry Agathon to one comarch. "Though we have written to you and given you orders, you have paid no heed."²

The reprimand was probably deserved: but the agent of the state no less than the peasant was frequently in need of protection. Offices were openly bought and sold, and the successful candidate paid a stiff price for the privilege of securing the state. One village comogrammateus, or scribe, has left on record the cost to him of the situation. "On appointment," he promised his superior, "I will pay at the village fifty artabas of wheat, ten of lentils, ten of peas, ten of mixed seed, and Dorion will pay also

¹ Tebtunis Papyri, vol. iii., part i., No. 758. Zenon Papyrus, Cairo Museum, No. 58,964.

² *Ibid.*, No. 768.

fifty artabas of wheat.”¹ Although this individual and his fellows expected to recoup themselves later, payment on appointment was only the beginning of their troubles. “As soon as you collect anything,” wrote authority sharply to a local agent, “you do not exact payment from others, but are neglectful. Their securities ought to have been here long ago and sold.”² Ptolemaic government certainly needed purifying at this period no less than it had done under the first Euergetes.

The townsman lived more cheerfully, meeting his acquaintances at the local clubs that sprang up in the provinces. These institutions were social rather than political: guilds or perhaps embryonic trade unions, whose members combined business with conviviality. A certain method inspired the proceedings. Minutes were kept, names of members and guests present and details of the entertainment provided were scrupulously recorded. One Hermias and his friends, of Hibeh (near Beni Suef), possibly coachmen and head grooms, were accustomed to meet in “the corn loft” or in “the harness room” of some stables.³ The company was no doubt a jolly one that enjoyed their wine (a good Memphite vintage), admired the playing of Hellanicos the flautist, and applauded the dancing of the inevitable catamite, or boy dressed in woman’s clothes. These clubs were maintained by subscription, and the expenses of a meeting divided among members and guests. One account that has escaped destruction amounted to three silver drachmas a head: a substantial sum for servants, whose monthly pay could hardly have exceeded five drachmas. Side by side with these clubs existed also many religious brotherhoods and assemblies, of which lay priests were the leaders. Thus one such guild at Syene or Aswan propagated the cult of the Divine Ptolemies, a second at Taposiris (Abusir) the gods Osiris and Isis, a third in Arsinoites or the Fayum the crocodile god Suchos, a fourth in Alexandria the god Anubis.

The existence of these clubs and societies implies a certain standard of education in provincial Egypt, and the papyri of the period support the conjecture. Young men had to pass a qualifying test before admission to the public services. Thus a Tebtunis correspondent refers to the examination in hieratic and demotic of candidates before ordination to the priesthood, and a second

¹ Tebtunis Papyri, vol. i., iii., 9.

² Hibeh Papyri, vol. i. No. 46, p. 189.

³ Edgar, C. C., *Raccolta di Scritti in onore G. Lumbroso*. Milan, 1926.

writer, a mother, congratulates her son upon becoming tutor to the family of the local doctor, presumably an Egyptian, owing to his knowledge of demotic. The well-to-do Greek in Egypt sent his boys either abroad to complete their education, or took advantage of a neighbouring gymnasium to educate his family at home. These gymnasia, founded and presumably endowed by the state, provided, no doubt, reasonably good education. The gymnasiarch or director was a local notable, invested with the honourable title of epistates, the pupil, the future ephebe, usually the son of a cleruch or ex-mercenary and in common with his father liable to military service in national emergency. The example spread over the Aegean. Spirited princes of Asia Minor instituted in their dominions similar schools: the poorer islands and city-states of Greece hurried to beg from the wealthy king of Egypt a subvention that would enable them also to create gymnasia. Ptolemy Philadelphus was deluged by appeals of this nature: but this Ptolemy had other uses for his money, and his affection for Hellenism stopped at patronage that cost him nothing. Even the promise of a statue to his memory in the market-place did not alter that decision.

Of this bucolic society strangers to Egypt knew little. Few visitors went farther than Alexandria, for the throne, ashamed of exposing the nakedness of the country, discouraged excursions up the Nile. It was a principle upon which it could not always insist, and when Lucius Mummius, "a Roman senator occupying a position of the highest rank and honour," expressed a wish to see something of the country, the government had to sink their prejudice. None the less, they confined Mummius' tour to the Arsinoite nome, wherein lay the royal domains reserved for the discharged soldier and retired official: the one nome where the royal word still passed undisputed. There, it was anticipated, this distinguished Roman would appreciate the benevolent attitude of the government to the people. So to Philadelphia, the capital, Lucius Mummius, carefully shepherded and hospitably entertained, made his way. He explored the mysterious labyrinth, he fed with the "customary tit-bits" the sacred crocodiles, he remarked the universal reverence these uncouth monsters attracted. The popularity of Petesuchos, the crocodile god, no doubt astonished him: in one village alone Mummius was shown five shrines raised to the honour of this deity.

A greater achievement than the entertainment of distinguished visitors was reform of the judicial system. In criminal procedure Egypt had contrived to escape from the archaic and draconic practices of the Pharaohs. Perjury presumably was no longer

punished with death as an offence against the gods, or adultery by a thousand lashes as an offence against morality, and judicial functions were separated from sacerdotal. The supreme court once drawn from the priesthoods of Heliopolis, Memphis and Thebes appears to have given place to a tribunal more competent to administer law, and in the nome the strategus or governor to have replaced the high priest. Development of trade needed also radical revision of civil procedure. The existing forms were no longer suitable to a commercial community, and Euergetes boldly swept away obscurities that embarrassed court and suitor alike. Discarding tradition, he introduced a procedure that guaranteed a fair hearing to Greeks and Egyptians alike: a procedure that was the prototype in form of the modern Egyptian mixed tribunals. Hitherto the practice had been loose. Suits instituted between Greeks or between the foreign and Egyptian communities had been decided by the chrematistes, or greek judges, according to greek law, suits between Egyptians by the laocrites, or egyptian judges, according to law formulated in the temple: but with the incursion of Egyptians into commerce, difficulties had arisen. Contracts between Greeks and Egyptians were drafted indifferently in greek or in demotic, and in a dispute concerning the interpretation of the clauses each party claimed as umpire a judge of his own nationality. To end the confusion Euergetes decreed that disputed contracts written in greek should be heard by chrematistes, and contracts written in demotic by the laocrites, irrespective of the nationality of the suitors. It was a sensible reform.

It was also an inevitable corollary to the royal interest in administration that correspondence between the capital and the nomes or provinces should increase. Literacy was spreading, communication by word of mouth less common. The trader, like the official, found it necessary now to correspond with his provincial agents, and the need of stiffening the carrier services of Egypt was very obvious. Presumably measures were taken to improve them, since despite its increasing bulk, royal and government correspondence was apparently expeditiously and regularly carried from the capital to the provinces and conversely.¹ At various centres offices staffed by the state and provided with postmen and their escorts, received and forwarded twice every twenty-four hours letters and parcels. Each office kept a day-book² or station diary

¹ F. Preisigke, *Die Ptolemaische Staatspost*. Klio, Leipzig, 1907.

² Hibeh Papyri, 110.

that noted the hours of arrival and dispatch of mails and the contents of each post-bag. Thus at Heracleopolis one day "the first hour Theocrestus delivered to Dinias three rolls from the upper country, of which two were for King Ptolemy, and one for Apollonius the dioecetes, and Dinias handed them over to Hippolysus." Two days later a heavier mail arrived from the capital. One Nicodemus "delivered to a certain Alexander from the lower country rolls from King Ptolemy for Antiochus in the Heracleopolite nome, other rolls addressed to Demetrius in charge of elephants in the Thebaid, to Antiochus at Apollonopolis the Great, to Theogenes the money-carrier, Zoilus the baker, and Dionysius the oeconomus."

This elaborate organization suggests that the local office accepted and delivered not only official but also private correspondence within its circumscription, or an insignificant country town of the size of Heracleopolis would hardly have needed the services of forty-four postmen. Royal correspondence went by horse, private by foot, parcel by camel; yet the cost to the state was probably moderate enough. The dispatch riders were young men of good family, sons of cleruchs bound by their oath to keep a horse or two on the king's service; the postmen and escorts were humble peasants unpaid for their services. It was a cheap and apparently efficient organization: a credit to Ptolemaic administration even if it can only claim to have perfected Persian practice.

With advancing years a craving for popularity fastened on Euergetes: a passion born perhaps of an ambition to wipe out the memory of past crimes and follies, and so pass into history as a benevolent sovereign solicitous of the welfare of his subjects. To this end he imitated the royal progresses of his brother: exhorting the administration to deal gently with offending villagers, recommending the latter to compose their quarrels with the state. There was throughout the Ptolemaic period ample cause for the first counsel. The attitude of the administration was always arbitrary. The royal decree forbidding "officials in charge of crown, state and sacred institutions to arrest anyone on account of private debt or quarrel" was ignored: so also was its corollary, requiring the administration to take "such offenders before a magistrate." Other legitimate grievances came to light in the course of one such progress: notably that of the priests and people of Philae, who complained bitterly of the obligation to furnish troops and officials with free lodging and food. It was the law of the island, but in seasons of low Nile starvation stared the victims in the

face. From the liability Euergetes released Philae, and the grateful priests set up in the temple of Isis a little obelisk inscribed with the king's command. His interest in all that pertained to Egyptian religion was as catholic as that of his predecessors: he patronized all gods, he restored decayed shrines and temples at his own expense, as inscriptions and reliefs at Karnak, Medinet Habu, Deir el Bahari, Deir el Medineh, El Kab and elsewhere testify.

To the great fane of Edfu, now approaching completion, he paid particular honour: dedicating within its precincts a temple to Horus, and laying the foundations of the two massive pylons that guard the entrance to the Great Hall. This noble temple, in plan rigidly Egyptian, that the first Euergetes had begun a hundred years earlier was now approaching completion: a splendid creation that successive Ptolemies had embellished, as the fancy moved them. It owed nothing to Greek inspiration. Design and decoration followed closely Pharaonic practice, and the builders had not tried to harmonize two architectural styles or two religious beliefs each inimical to the other.¹ Nor was any Ptolemy likely to countenance an experiment little likely to be commended by a conservative priesthood. Agricultural Egypt followed the lead of the latter, and to secure the priests' goodwill the dynasty was prepared to pay handsomely. The reward was worth the sacrifice, since through the priests' kind offices the king could pose as divine. Entering the temple under the pylons he would pass through the great court and the hall, and come to a halt on the threshold of the sanctuary. There the accompanying priests fell back and performed the customary ceremonies, while the king advanced to speak with the god himself.

Edfu was a temple that owed its revenue, notoriously substantial, to the benefactions of successive Ptolemies. The area of its possessions approached the astounding figure of 18,336 arourae, or fifty square kilometres, of soil, its income was further increased by an annual subvention from the royal treasury paid partly in money and partly in kind. But tales that redounded little to the credit of the temple had filtered to Alexandria, and Euergetes thought it his duty to speak plainly to the priesthood on the point. It was openly said that the priests preyed upon the congregation, grew fat at the temple's expense, and the king reproached the offenders. Their avarice and malevolence, he declared, were a byword throughout Egypt, and the reputation of the temple would

¹ G. Steindorff, *Egyptian Art*. Baedeker's *Egypt*, Leipzig, 1929

be higher if priests abstained from pillage and slander, moderated their arrogance, and remembered better their sacred calling. The Prophet of the temple and his acolytes bent their heads, and Euergetes continued his homily.¹ Let the priest check his habit of lying to gain an advantage, let him refrain from the use of profane words and idle boasts. The rebuke must have been justified, or Euergetes would not have commanded the high priest to inscribe the royal admonition upon the walls of the temple.

Inscriptions and reliefs did not satisfy Euergetes' ambition. He wanted above all things to emulate his ancestor and namesake the first Euergetes: to build a spacious shrine and instal as its presiding deity a forgotten or neglected god of ancient Egypt. The first task was beyond his power. Within his few remaining years of life, Euergetes could not hope to raise a temple which in size and glory would match that of Edfu, nor could he discover in the Egyptian pantheon a national god who had not his faithful worshippers till he found in Memphis an inspiring alternative. There the Persians had overcome the difficulty by deifying Imhotep, vizier, physician and architect of Zozer, a Pharaoh of the third dynasty, and in Amenhotep, son of Hapu, a distinguished figure of the eighteenth dynasty, Euergetes solved his problem also. Upon this son of Hapu he conferred fresh honours, and at Thebes dedicated a chapel to his memory. It was a strange fancy: stranger still, in that the priesthood and laity hospitably welcomed the new god to their overcrowded pantheon.

It was his last act: the end came in 116 B.C. in the sixty-ninth year of his age. In one form or other, he had borne the title of king for fifty-three years: six with his brother Philometor in Alexandria, eighteen in Cyrene, twenty-nine again in Egypt. History has pronounced him to be the most vicious and selfish of all the Ptolemies, and despite his changed attitude in the last years of his life, the judgement does not seem unfair.

¹ W. Otto, vol. ii., p. 238. *Priester und Tempel im Hellenistischen Ägypten*. Berlin & Leipzig, 1905-8.



Ptolemy Euergetes II adoring the Theban Triad

(British Museum)

CHAPTER XI

PTOLEMY SOTER II, COMMONLY KNOWN AS LATHYRUS	116-106 B.C.
PTOLEMY ALEXANDER I.	106-88 B.C.
PTOLEMY SOTER II, LATHYRUS.	88-80 B.C.
PTOLEMY ALEXANDER II.	80 B.C.

FROM this point the Ptolemies become a dynasty of women rather than of men. The rule remains virile, but the queen's personality dominates that of the king—a break with tradition that the second Cleopatra initiated and the third had cemented. No doubt the royal consort from the beginning bore the sonorous title of basilissa; but the dignity was an empty one until Cleopatra II, claiming equality, had forced first Alexandria, then Rome, to acknowledge her joint sovereignty. It was a misfortune for the dynasty: pursued by ambition to rule singly, Cleopatra III spent her last years of life in sowing discord among her children.

She had been a good wife, condoning her husband's infidelities, sharing his vicissitudes uncomplainingly. Nor was the union a loveless one: to Euergetes Cleopatra III had born five children: two Ptolemies, the elder officially known as Soter II and familiarly as Lathyrus or chick-pea, the younger named Alexander, and three daughters. Two of the girls had been married in their father's lifetime: the eldest to Antiochus Grypus of Syria, the second, Cleopatra IV, to her brother Lathyrus, while the third, Selene (later Cleopatra V), still awaited a husband. They were children taught to obey rather than love, and the mother saw to it that the lesson was learnt. Child-bearing had absorbed Cleopatra's energies during her first years of queenship; but ambition was only slumbering, and she persuaded her husband on his death-bed to name her as his successor on the throne. The inheritance was truncated by the loss of Cyrenaica. Pardoned by Philometer in Cyprus, the embittered Euergetes had retired to his province, nursing revenge. It was in his mind to rob his brother's heirs of part of their patrimony, and to this end he had bequeathed Cyrenaica to Apion, one of his many illegitimate children. The will was never cancelled, nor was Apion's title questioned; yet

Euergetes might have spared himself the pains. His brother's children predeceased him, and he had only robbed his own legitimate children.

Euergetes' last testament contained one embarrassing condition: it charged his widow to nominate one of her two sons as co-sovereign, and Cleopatra hesitated over the choice. Her preference was for Alexander, the younger brother, for she doubted her power to frighten into submission Lathyrus' sister-wife, a rebellious child who had grown into a domineering young woman. There would be a sharp tussle between mother and daughter, and Cleopatra III had no intention of renewing her own history. Unhappily, the last word still lay with the army, and she knew its obstinate prejudice in favour of primogeniture too well to run counter to it. So, putting a good face on the business, she summoned Lathyrus, then viceroy of Cyprus, and received him as her partner. He was a selfish young man, delighted to exchange a vice-regency for a half of a throne, but his wife was less easily satisfied. She objected to her mother's air of superiority; she commented scornfully upon her assumption of the title of the saviour goddess. If any member of the family was entitled to the title, in the daughter's belief, it was the wife and not the widow of a king. A variation in the protocol increased her resentment. It ran simply "Queen Cleopatra and King Ptolemy," deliberately ignoring her existence.¹

She urged her husband to protest, but, busy in meditating upon his own interest, Lathyrus did not interfere. Did precedence lie with his mother or with his wife? He intended to rule as king and not as partner of the throne, and if he could embroil the two women over a dispute of precedence, the better for his private purposes. Reading her son's thoughts, Cleopatra III lectured her son and consort upon the impropriety of family dissension. She recounted the many misfortunes that had overtaken the throne through family dispute; she counselled him for the sake of the dynasty to repudiate this troublesome woman and marry his young sister Selene. Convinced in time that his mother was the stronger, and caring little who was his wife now that he was king, Lathyrus roughly bade Cleopatra IV leave Egypt. The victim did not argue but, crossing to Cyprus, raised an army and offered her hand and troops to Cyzenicus, then at war with his cousin Grypus, the eighth Antiochus of Syria, husband of

¹ Oliverio Caspara, *La Stele di Ptolemeo Neoteros re di Cirene*. Bergamo, 1934.

Cleopatra's elder sister. Thus a conflict between two Syrian cousins came to be a war between two Egyptian sisters. Defeated in the field, Cyzenicus and Cleopatra IV barricaded themselves in Antiochia, and when that stronghold capitulated, the wife sought safety in the temple of Artemis. It was no sanctuary: dragged from the altar, the luckless Cleopatra IV was put to death by her ruthless sister. A few months later death overtook the murderess. She fell into Grypus' hands and died horribly, "an atonement to the manes"¹ of her captor's wife. Thus perished two of the seven Cleopatras of Egypt, of whom history can say little that is good.

Alexandria had let Lathyrus' wife depart without comment: if the king preferred as consort a mother to a sister, it was his own business, and the community asked no more of the pair than to live in harmony. To fortify that expectation, the mother bade her son style himself Soter II Philometor, amended the protocol to read "Queen Cleopatra, King Ptolemy, Gods Philometores, and his children," and sent Alexander to Cyprus in place of his elder brother. These measures would have been more effective had not the queen denied Lathyrus any part in the government. His advice was unsolicited, his wishes were ignored, and he resented the slight. The mother was genuinely surprised. This foolish son seemed to have forgotten already the fate of his wife, and Cleopatra considered his replacement by Alexander. But that must wait till her hands were free from administrative and other business. Moreover, she was busy with that enterprising mariner Eudoxus of Cyzicus, again in Alexandria, and urging the queen to patronize another adventure in the Indian Ocean. The first, financed by Euergetes, had brought back a profitable cargo of "aromatics and precious stones," and Eudoxus promised a more handsome return from a second. The temptation was too great for Cleopatra: she provided Eudoxus with ships, she charged him to return with more precious stones and less aromatics. But outside the straits of Bab-el-Mandeb the monsoon caught the admiral, and to escape its fury he altered his course. Off Somaliland he found a prize that seemed to him to be worth all the precious stones in the world: it was the figurehead of a castaway Phoenician vessel that must have rounded Africa. The find settled once and for all in the belief of this navigator the disputed point whether or not Africa was circumnavigable, and, anxious to have the credit of the discovery, Eudoxus hurried back without either stones or aromatics. His reception in Alexandria was cold: the queen, who cared nothing

¹ Justin, bk. xxxix., ch. 3.

for geography, accused Eudoxus of selling his cargo deceitfully, and when this honest and adventurous man answered spiritedly and derided the charge, he was sent to prison. There he languished for some months, until Cleopatra sulkily bade him go back to his own country. Eudoxus asked nothing better. In Cyzicus he found a more enlightened patron, and, passing through the Pillars of Hercules, sailed boldly down the Atlantic, bent upon circumnavigating the continent of Africa in his own ship.

Meanwhile Lathyrus, fretting at his subordination, had begun a secret correspondence with Syria. For once in a way that kingdom was enjoying a brief respite from war. Grypus and Cyzicenus had compromised their quarrel, and were sharing the government: the first was ruling over Syria proper, the second over Coelesyria. It was an unequal division, and Cyzicenus cast a covetous eye upon Palestine. His opportunity came when John Hyrcanus—prophet, priest and king—laid siege to the schismatical city of Samaria, and its inhabitants appealed to Cyzicenus. But Hyrcanus in the Judæan hills was more than a match for his new enemy. He trapped him in an ambush, forced him to beat a hasty retreat, and tightened the investment of Samaria. Smarting under defeat, Cyzicenus appealed to Lathyrus, and from Alexandria the king sent secretly six thousand mercenaries to the aid of his friend. His design was plain enough: he intended his mother to understand that he was the ruler of Egypt. Cleopatra was furious at the news. That her son should move a soldier without her leave was offence enough: that he should outrage the Jews of Egypt by helping a persecutor of their race reduced her to despair. She counterstruck by nominating two notable Jews of Alexandria to high command in the army, and by assuring Hyrcanus of her support. Lathyrus met the challenge by minting his own money, by issuing his own decrees, and Cleopatra planned a counterstroke of her own. One morning the palace eunuchs, exposing their bleeding wounds, sallied into the public streets, crying that Lathyrus had attempted to assassinate his mother, Queen Cleopatra. It was an old device that never seemed to fail. At once a mob gathered in the palace grounds, shouting in turn "Death to the Parricide." There was no truth in the story, but, frightened by the tumult, Lathyrus fled to Cyprus, and Cleopatra let him go. She held as hostages in Alexandria his second wife, Selene Cleopatra, and his child, and in Pelusium Alexander, her younger son, was awaiting a call to join his mother.

Egypt did not contest the younger son's claim to the throne.

Respect for the dynasty was weakening: Alexandria was surfeited with these domestic differences. Its citizens had spoken of Euergetes as "Fatty," they now called Alexander "the Intruder." But as so frequently happened, indignation stopped at words. The counterstroke excited only gossip, and Cleopatra regretted she had permitted Lathyrus to escape with life. To atone for the negligence, she sent troops to Cyprus with orders to bring back the fugitive. She was too late. Lathyrus got wind of the intention, and sailed to Seleucia-in-Pieria. There Cyzicenus, burning to wipe out his defeat at the hands of Hyrcanus, welcomed the fugitive, provided him with funds, and sent him back to Cyprus to raise a contingent of mercenaries. Meanwhile Hyrcanus had died (104 B.C.), and Jannaeus, an implacable antagonist, was taking the field. Possession of Ptolemais (Acre) was his first objective, and its inhabitants implored Cyzicenus to come to the relief. But Cyzicenus dared not leave Seleucia at that moment, and Ptolemais, in despair, appealed to Lathyrus, promising him the overlordship of Sidon and Caesarea in return for his help. Lathyrus did not hesitate: with the mercenaries intended for Cyzicenus, he would crush Jannaeus, occupy Palestine, and march on Egypt. Thus should his mother pay for her sin against him.

He disembarked at Haifa, crossed the plain of Esdraelon, and forced Jannaeus to raise the siege. The triumph was to no purpose: thinking it now better to be the prize of a Jew than slave of a Ptolemy, Ptolemais refused Lathyrus admission.¹ Mortified and disappointed, he began a double correspondence: one with Jannaeus, and a second with Jannaeus' enemy, the people of Gaza. The astute Jannaeus, perceiving that Lathyrus' troops were for sale, promptly offered four hundred talents for their services. It was a handsome bribe, which Lathyrus accepted in the spirit in which it was offered: he broke off negotiation with Gaza, and laid siege to Ptolemais. Before the money had been paid down, Jannaeus repented his haste: a cheaper way of dislodging Lathyrus lay in an alliance with Lathyrus' mother. Cleopatra was very ready to enter one: she sent her grandchildren and the crown jewels to Cos, she mobilized her land and sea forces. But ships and troops dallied on the way, and Lathyrus got wind of Jannaeus' treachery. Perceiving the peril, he turned on the traitor; advanced into Galilee, stormed the city of Asochis one Sabbath morning, took 10,000 prisoners, and marched upon Sophoris, a second fortress. He was about to deliver his assault, when spies

¹ Josephus, *Antiquities*, bk. xiii., ch. 12.

reported the presence of Jannaeus in force on the other side of the Jordan. In the field Lathyrus was a more formidable figure than on the throne. He withdrew from Sophoris, crossed the Jordan, and flung himself upon the enemy: a brilliant feat of arms that left him master of Palestine.

Hardly a Jew survived to tell of the defeat. But the campaign was not yet ended: his brother Alexander, in command of a powerful Egyptian squadron, was hovering off the coast of Phoenicia, and his mother's Jewish general, Chelkias, pushing his way to the north. Lathyrus turned to meet the latter, and an indecisive battle on the Egyptian-Palestine frontier followed. Casualties were heavy, and Chelkias was among the dead: Cleopatra III hurried up reinforcements, and Lathyrus discreetly retired on Gaza. Ptolemais had capitulated, but the tables were turned, and the conqueror of Jannaeus found himself pinned within the walls of Gaza. Nothing his mother could do was left undone to dislodge Lathyrus in Palestine. She urged Grypus to arm, she sent the accommodating Selene to marry him: she reinforced her army in Sinai, and bade it turn Lathyrus out of Gaza. The campaign ended in a moral victory for Cleopatra: Lathyrus returned to Cyprus, and Jannaeus became her humble servant. Palestine, in short, seemed to her a prize of war for the asking. Ananias, Cleopatra's new military adviser, saved Jewry from the indignity. He hinted that the annexation would alienate his co-religionists in Egypt, he urged his mistress to consider whether an occupation of Jerusalem was worth the price.

This adventure was the last exploit of Cleopatra III. She died in 101 B.C. about the age of sixty, murdered, if Justin is credited, by her son Alexander: a woman "who had driven her mother from the bed of her husband, had made her two daughters widows by alternate marriage with a brother, had made war upon one of her sons after driving him into exile, and plotted against the other."¹ A gloomy portrait: over-coloured perhaps, but no doubt substantially true. To have dominion over mens' souls as well as bodies, she had proclaimed herself to be the Living Incarnation of Isis, the Divine Mother, the Saviour Goddess, the Twin Osiris-Euergetes, the Star of Victory. Yet this Cleopatra left no mark upon the policy or administration of Egypt, and the many chances that came her way she missed or mishandled so consistently that posterity knows her best as the most unscrupulous woman of the dynasty.

¹ Justin, xxxix., ch. 4.

Uncertain of public opinion, Alexander effaced himself until comment had died down. He need have felt no concern: Egypt's interest in the private fortunes of the dynasty had dwindled. Kings and queens came and went, but their history was only a record of election and deposition, of flight and murder, and between the two sons of Cleopatra III there was little to choose. The elder had taken up arms against his country, the younger had slain his mother. If a king there must be, Egypt was indifferent whether Lathyrus or Alexander was he. The second, moving quickly, seized the sceptre. Married to Berenice, daughter of his brother, he thought to obliterate memory of his crime by speaking of himself and his wife as Gods Philometores. The conceit amused Alexandria, and they nicknamed the new sovereign afresh. He was now "Old Pimples," and certainly he deserved the appellation: a mountain of flesh, a face blotched and pimpled. Still under forty, he was "unable to walk unless he went leaning on two friends." His antics also were the talk of the town. At the supper table, it was his pleasure, despite his bulk, to "leap from a high couch, and dance with more vigour than even those who made dancing their profession."¹ A dignified sovereign indeed.

Alexander's cynical indifference to the loss of Cyrenaica, following the death of Apion, heir of his father Euergetes, in 97 B.C., shocked the Greek community of Egypt. Dying childless, Apion had left his patrimony to Rome. It was a betrayal of Hellenism and of tradition, and Egypt awaited an indignant protest from the king. But the murmurs found no echo in Alexander's heart. Amusement was his only interest, its pursuit his only occupation, and absorbed in both, he would have sacrificed all Egypt, were Rome to guarantee his sovereignty for life. No less bitter to the Greek was the knowledge that Cyrenaica welcomed the change. The people had never liked their association with the Ptolemies, and the rule of a Roman senate seemed an agreeable alternative to that of an Egyptian king. A gloomy despair settled upon Alexandria: the suspicion, latent for generations, that Rome contemplated the extinction of Hellenism throughout the Aegean, hardened. No principality or city that clung to Greek tradition was apparently now safe from the clutches of Rome: would Egypt then escape a fate that had overtaken Macedonia and Cyrenaica, and that was threatening also Pontus and Syria? It was a contingency that Alexandria dared not deny.

¹ Athenaeus, bk. xii., para. 73.

Of covert looks and muttered imprecations the king took no notice: in his search for pleasure, he neglected public business, he associated with parasites and flatterers. His unpopularity grew apace, his name stank in the nostrils of all men. For the misfortune he had only himself to blame. He seldom stirred outside the palace. The provinces he never visited, the provincial priesthood he ignored. It was a capital error, since it threw the priests of Upper Egypt into the arms of the dynasty's enemies. Taking advantage of Alexander's indifference, the administration squeezed the harder religious corporations and cultivators of temple domain. Certain corporations, no doubt, were tempting fields to exploit. From the benefactions of successive Ptolemies and contributions of pious worshippers, some had become extremely wealthy. Other causes contributed to the universal discontent, until, ashamed of this foolish king, who permitted insurrection to breed unchecked, Alexandria one morning invited him to choose between abdication and deposition. For answer he stole into Syria, recruited an army, and at its head re-entered the capital. To pay his men, he robbed the Sema of the golden sarcophagus that held the remains of his great namesake,¹ and the outrage goaded Alexandria to take up arms. His cause was soon lost, and deserted by his mercenaries, Alexander fled to Asia Minor. An Egyptian squadron put out to give chase, but the fugitive had the legs of the pursuers, and made good his escape. Brooding in Lycia over his injuries, the king raised a fresh contingent, and sailed to Cyprus. But this time Alexandria made no mistake. A powerful fleet awaited the raiders off the island, and in the engagement that followed Alexander lost his life.

The election of a successor excited little interest: though shaken by Alexander's impotent rule, public opinion was not prepared to substitute for sovereign government an oligarchy or democracy. Neither were suitable for a cosmopolitan capital such as Alexandria, still less for provincial Egypt, accustomed to be ruled by a single authority invested with the traditional halo of divinity. Once again there was only one obvious candidate, Lathyrus, still languishing in Cyprus: the more so since common report declared that exile had mellowed this Ptolemy. So in 88 B.C. Lathyrus came back and, ignoring the past, Alexandria hailed him as Pothinus, or the Desired One. Conditions were not auspicious. Smouldering discontent and unrest were developing into rebellion,

¹ Strabo, xvii., div. 8.

and the priesthood urging their congregations to defy the throne. Communication between Upper Egypt and Alexandria was cut, the epistrategus or high commissioner of the Thebaid struggling to maintain his authority. But gossip had magnified the extent of the mischief, and the truth was not so bad as all that. Plato, the epistrategus in question, hurrying from Ptolemais (the modern Menschia), his headquarters, had advanced to Latopolis (Esna), when a despairing cry from a few loyal inhabitants of Pathyris, midway between Thebes and Latopolis, caught his attentive ear. He ordered Neckthyris to the place, recommending this staff officer "to be on his guard, to keep cool, and hint that the epistrategus himself was following," and simultaneously advised Pathyris to obey his lieutenant's orders. Thus without warning the situation had suddenly become critical: if Pathyris, a key place, joined in the rebellion, the Thebaid was lost. All now depended upon the attitude of the priesthood, and to it Plato published a special message. "You will do well," he announced "to rally to Neckthyris in order that Pathyris may be kept safe for our Lord the King. If you remain loyal, you will meet with fitting recompense from those above." The Theban priesthood felt uncertain, and as the summer wore on, matters went from bad to worse. Plato continued to hold Pathyris, but Thebes, Abydos, and other centres fell to the rebels.

Lathyrus acted decisively, moving himself to Memphis, dispatching a punitive column to Upper Egypt. At once Plato published the cheering news. "Philoxemis, my brother," he informed the priests of Pathyris, "has written to say that King Soter our Lord God already at Memphis has desired Hierax to suppress disorder in the Thebaid. I have pleasure in communicating this news, in order that you may maintain your confidence."¹ Three years went by before Hierax accomplished his mission, or Plato could repair his broken authority: more than one pitched battle had to be fought, and more than one city stormed, before the administration could lay hands upon the ringleaders. That was a less difficult business than may be supposed, for one way or another Ptolemaic bureaucracy possessed a tolerably accurate description of every individual cultivator in the country. Portraiture in words indeed had become a fine art. The description was meticulous: the terms used were conventional. Thus a man was

¹ P. Collart, *Révolte de la Thébaïde (Recueil d' Études Égyptologiques)*, Paris, 1922. Also Papyrus No. 465, London; translated by P. Jouguet and B. Grenfell. Also E. R. Bevan, *History of Egypt under the Ptolemaic Dynasty*, p. 335.

tall or short: if tall either broad or thin, if short either small to middling or middling to short. His complexion was honey-coloured, dark or clear, ruddy or pale: his face round or oval, fat or hollow-cheeked. The nose might be snub, thick, straight or aquiline: the eyes brown, blue, grey or light, protruding or sunken: the sight long or short. No transaction apparently was valid unless accompanied by an elaborate description of all parties concerned. One typical contract reads thus: "Therous, daughter of Neckt-tet-humisus, about fifty years of age, light-skinned, round-faced, short, straight nose with scar over her eyebrow, together with her guardian Heraclides, a Persian about forty-five years of age, light-skinned, short, bow-legged, scantily bearded, has bought . . ."¹ Few offenders could hope to evade justice in Ptolemaic Egypt.

Assured that Hierax had the Thebaid in hand, Lathyrus returned to Alexandria. A melancholy sense of loneliness fastened on him: he was king without a queen, and he needed a woman at his side very badly. With advancing years passion had lost its enchantment and licence its charm: he sought now a companion rather than a mistress. The void was not easy to fill. There was no Seleucid cousin to wed, and the only possible bride with Ptolemy blood in her veins was his own daughter, Berenice. Marriage with her was out of the question: loose as the morality of the time was, public opinion would not tolerate co-habitation of a father and daughter, and the difficulty seemed insuperable, until some "kinsman" of the king suggested that Berenice should become her father's consort without the ceremony of marriage. It was common sense, and Alexandria cheerfully accepted the compromise in the belief that a tender father and a dutiful daughter would be less likely to quarrel than a domineering mother and an unnatural son. So Berenice, who had accompanied her husband, Alexander I, in his flight to Lycia, came back to Egypt in time to receive a distinguished Roman visitor, and from this point the history of Egypt is inseparable from that of Rome.

Since 100 B.C. Rome had been battling with a social revolution that threatened to destroy the unity of the Republic. In the struggle many ideals and standards had perished, and the familiar catchwords *virtus et pietas* had lost their significance. The old order was giving way to the new. Power, hitherto a monopoly of the aristocracy, was passing to capitalists and speculators each eager to exploit Roman conquest overseas. To these men there

¹ Tebtunis Papyri, vol. iii., Part I, No. 814; also *Das signalement in den papyrusurkunden* (J. Hasebrock, Heidelberg, 1921).

flocked degenerate patricians, needy freedmen, and enterprising usurers, all bent on the same quest. The *populares* or radical elements of the Republic were little better off: from a patriotic party they had sunk into a venal and embittered proletariat, until sober men looked anxiously for a leader strong enough to restore order. Marius, plebeian by birth, anti-aristocrat by conviction, was their choice. His programme was too drastic: closing their ranks, the *optimates* drove Marius into temporary retirement, and ranged themselves behind Sulla. The outbreak of the Social War, a quarrel concerning the right of citizenship, extinguished the rivalry for a time: once the supremacy of the Republic was at stake, the two men fought side by side. But the respite was only momentary. War was impending in Asia, Marius and Sulla were contending for the command. The second was the younger and the stronger. He advanced on Rome, drove out his rival, and in 87 B.C. crossed the Adriatic at the head of 30,000 horse and foot.

The enemy was Mithridates of Pontus: a formidable antagonist whose fleet numbered four hundred sail, whose army ran into hundreds of thousands. The campaign opened unfavourably for Roman arms. Scattered legions in Asia were overwhelmed, their commander became a captive, and the elated Mithridates proclaimed a massacre of all Romans within his dominions. Meanwhile Macedonia and Greece had joined the enemy, and Sulla was investing Athens. It was a ruthless siege, but Sulla could not afford to be scrupulous. To build engines of war, he cut down the classic groves of the Academy, "shadiest of all suburbs," and those of the Lyceum.¹ Still victory eluded him: he needed a fleet to re-open communication with home. To create one, he commissioned the youthful Lucius Lucullus to beg, borrow, or steal ships from kings and princes still friends to the Republic, and in the depths of winter Lucullus set out on his dangerous expedition. He ran the enemy's blockade, touched at Crete, passed over to the city of Cyrene. There he stayed to refit for a week or two; then, hugging the Libyan coast, sailed to Alexandria. Fortune favoured him: eluding a squadron of pirates, he reached port safely.

Desirous of maintaining amicable relations both with Sulla and Mithridates, Lathyrus confidently expected the visitor would appreciate his embarrassment. It was surely obvious enough. If Egypt furnished Sulla with ships, Mithridates would account her his enemy: if Egypt refused, Sulla would be offended. No such reflection crossed Lucullus' simple mind: he thought it, indeed,

¹ Plutarch's *Lives*, *Sulla*.

only reasonable that Egypt, out of friendship, should provide a Roman general in need of ships with a squadron, and his only doubt concerned the hire and the strength of the last. He was perhaps excusably enough deceived by Lathyrus' hospitable welcome. An escort of Egyptian triremes met him outside the port, and piloted him to the royal anchorage. The king embraced the visitor on landing, lodged and dined him handsomely. Everyone conspired to entertain this engaging and erudite patrician and his secretary the philosopher Antiochus of Ascalon, an old pupil of Philo of Larissa, founder of the latest Academy in Athens. Follower and teacher had parted company over the truth or falsity of Plato's beliefs, and while Lucullus in the palace was discreetly hinting the objective of his mission, Antiochus in the Mouseion discoursed upon Philo's frailty. The philosopher found a more sympathetic audience than his chief. Within the palace, it was another story: still unable to decide whether to risk the anger of Sulla or the vengeance of Mithridates, Lathyrus maintained an impenetrable reserve. The days slipped past and Lucullus was no nearer accomplishing his mission. It was enough for the visitor to speak of ships for the host lightly to turn the conversation. At a more seasonable moment Lucullus, already an acknowledged epicure, would have been willing enough to discuss food and wine, but at this juncture he could not afford to trifle with time. One evening he bluntly asked the king whether he would or would not provide Sulla with ships. Driven into decision, Lathyrus admitted that he did not propose to supply them, but to sweeten the refusal he presented Lucullus with eighty silver talents for the expenses of the voyage. The gift was declined: the visitor's need was ships, not money. He would have also declined his host's personal present, a splendid emerald engraved with the king's portrait, had he dared: but that would have affronted the donor, and Lucullus pocketed his scruples.¹

In 80 B.C. Lathyrus died: a shadowy figure, in that no panegyrist has sung his praises, and no detractor recorded his follies. Apart from repression of rebellion in the Thebaid and refusal to assist Rome in the Mithridatic war, posterity associates the second reign of this Ptolemy with no signal achievement. Yet certain priest-hoods dutifully honoured his memory: notably that of "the Syene mountains" to commemorate a visit to Elephantine island, and that of Edfu to record his benefactions.

Under his will, the crown passed to his daughter, a virtuous and popular consort, and Alexandria did not contest her inheritance,

¹ Plutarch's *Lives*, *Lucullus*.

provided she found a male partner without delay. There was only one possible husband: a younger cousin, the child of the first Alexander by an unknown wife. His life had been a chequered one: an infancy spent in Alexandria, a boyhood in Cos, until Mithridates in 88 B.C. carried him off to Pergamum, his capital. From that semi-captivity the youthful Alexander contrived later to escape. He slipped across the sea, entered Rome, and solicited the protection of Sulla.

It was an astute move. The Mithridatic war was over, Marius was dead, and Sulla master of the Roman world. An obsequious Senate had invested him with the powers of a dictator, a fawning following spoke of him alternately as Felix and the favourite of Venus. Round Sulla there gathered a heterogeneous band of demoralized patricians, plebeians and princes of Asia Minor, all hoping to benefit from his patronage. Among the princes was Alexander, protesting that he was the victim of a stepmother who had robbed him of the crown of Egypt. Sulla listened—thought the grievance reasonable enough. It suited the Roman to befriend this young client, since he himself bore a grudge against Egypt. He had neither forgotten nor pardoned Lathyrus' refusal to provide him with ships, and he proposed to make the queen pay for her father's contumacy. The young Alexander should be his instrument: a puppet sovereign willing to dance at his patron's bidding. So he gave Alexander his blessing, and bade him dispose of the queen as he thought fit.

Discovering on landing that Alexandria was projecting marriage between the two cousins as a convenient way of conforming with tradition, the visitor sulkily submitted to the ceremony. Hardly had it been performed than he regretted the weakness. He was young, and wanting no wife at that moment, least of all a woman verging on middle age, he meditated upon ridding himself of the incubus. Scruple in such matters had never troubled any bridegroom with Ptolemaic blood in his veins, nor did it this young man. Mithridates' theory of education had included a study of dynastic assassination, and Sulla's client took his cue from it. But Alexandria was not Pergamum, and its citizens heard with horror the news that Alexander II had murdered Berenice, their beloved queen. Retribution followed, a savage and bloody vengeance. Breaking into the royal apartments, the palace guards, with a mob at their back, seized the assassin, bore him screaming and struggling to the gymnasium, and there hacked him to death. Thus perished, after a reign of twenty days, Alexander II.

CHAPTER XII

PTOLEMY NEUS DIONYSUS (COMMONLY KNOWN AS AULETES).

80—51 B.C.

MEMORY was unretentive in Alexandria, and, absorbed in the exciting task of finding a new sovereign, citizens forgot the tragic murder of the queen. There was no time to lose. It was whispered that Berenice's husband had bequeathed Egypt to the Roman senate, it was rumoured that a Seleucid prince was claiming the succession, and rather than endure either incorporation within the Republic or the rule of a foreigner, Alexandria was prepared to accept as king any Ptolemy, whether born in or out of wedlock. All eyes turned again to Pontus, where a young family of Ptolemy Lathyrus by an unknown mistress had found shelter. Its sovereign, the speculative Mithridates, apparently was always ready to entertain the cast-off mistress of a Ptolemy and her illegitimate children in the sound belief that any royal bastard was a potential king. Thus when the invitation arrived in Pontus, Mithridates hopefully bade his guests good-bye and sent them to Egypt by way of Syria, and the Macedonian community welcomed respectfully this little family of two Ptolemies and two Cleopatras. Other communities followed the lead, saluting the elder boy as king, offering the younger the crown of Cyprus; desiring the first to conform to tradition by marrying his sister Tryphaena. At once the bride abandoned her birth-name and styled herself Cleopatra: simultaneously husband and wife spoke of themselves as "Brother and Sister, the Father-loving gods." More cynical citizens smiled at the conceit. "Nothus" or "bastard" in their belief would be a more appropriate epithet for the new king, and as Nothus this Ptolemy was universally known, until Alexandria, marking his fondness for the lute, nick-named him Auletes, or the piper.

None the less, the capital breathed more freely. One menace at last had disappeared. No Seleucid could now seize the crown, and if Rome would countenance the election of Auletes all would be well. Unhappily from the Senate no word came, and until they spoke, Alexandria hesitated to proceed with the ceremony of

coronation. The young king was less disturbed, until his tutor, the devoted Chairemon, explained the importance of obtaining the Republic's patronage. To such a pitch had relations between Rome and Egypt now come that a Ptolemy's tenure of the throne, hitherto at the mercy of a capricious capital, depended now upon the support of the Senate. Chairemon's homily ended with a lurid picture of Roman society. Virtue had vanished, patriotism departed: all men were corrupt, all institutions crumbling, and the philosopher urged his pupil to remember that bribery would succeed where diplomacy would fail. The procedure would be expensive, but Egypt was rich enough to support it, and Ptolemy Auletes understood the moral.

But Chairemon had misled the king: Egypt's resources were less elastic than he supposed. Revenue was dropping, expenditure increasing, and, more ominous still, the country's taxable capacity had reached its limit. Cyprus for some years had contributed little to the national treasury: Cyrenaica no longer paid tribute. Mithridates had carried off the crown jewels deposited in the island of Cos by the third Cleopatra and Rome had laid hands upon a sum of money placed in Tyre. Simultaneously receipts from crown monopolies were dwindling, and returns from the gold-mines of Nubia and the Red Sea now barely sufficed to cover expenses. The misfortune of the state reacted upon the business community. Trade was bad: bankers were chary of financing new enterprise, investors of venturing their savings. Certain industries, notably the manufacture of fine linen, were moribund, and the proletariat of Alexandria feeling the pinch of hunger. Uncertain of his market, the cultivator ceased to forward his foodstuffs, and the capital would have starved but for the spirited action of the king's council of state. A decree saved the situation. "No one of the nomes above Memphis doing business in wheat and beans," it ran, "may deal in the Lower country nor in the Thebaid by trickery. All foodstuffs are to be sent to Alexandria; and he who is found infringing this order is liable to death."¹

Thus until trade improved Chairemon's suggestion was clearly impracticable, and Ptolemy Auletes, shrewd beyond his years, approached the goal by another road. He grumbled at the delay of the ceremony of coronation: he asked what concern it was of Rome. Was he not the son of a Ptolemy: was he not in Egypt at

¹ Decree published in 79 B.C. (*Sammelbuch Griechische Urkunden, aus Egypten*, Freisicke-Bilabel, 1913-31).

the invitation of her inhabitants? Why, then, this hesitation, he inquired of his council of state, and gossip outside the palace repeated the question. The indignity of an uncrowned king wounded the vanity of Alexandria, and presently its citizens were clamouring for the ceremony to take place at once. The council bent to the tumult: stipulating only that the coronation must be private, they invited the high priest of Memphis to perform the ceremony in Alexandria. It was a departure from tradition, but the high priest of the time, Pa-Sher-en-Ptah, raised no objection.¹ He owed his office to Ptolemy Lathyrus, and he was ready to repay the favour by crowning the son of his patron "King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Master of the two Worlds, Father and Sister-loving God, the New Osiris," wherever the Council dictated. He lost nothing by the flattery, since at the close of the ceremony the king nominated him to be the Royal Prophet, and rewarded him handsomely for his pains in coming to Alexandria. It was money well laid out, for Pa-sher-en-Ptah saw to it later that Memphis gave his master a royal reception. Enthusiastic crowds lined the river-bank as the king, with his sister-wife Cleopatra, moved "up and down in his ship that he might behold both sides of the place," and a company of notables in Memphis watched the high priest set "the white crown upon the royal brow." It was Pa-sher-en-Ptah's way of placating his own god Ptah.

Well pleased, Auletes continued his voyage, and a chastened Thebaid received him no less hospitably. It was natural it should do so, for the young Auletes was agreeable enough, so long as his will was not crossed or his comfort disturbed. The welcome would have been less, had the country suspected the visitor was thinking less of the welfare of his subjects than of wringing money from them. Marking the fertility of the soil, he believed he had been tricked in Alexandria: instead of agricultural Egypt being over-taxed, he was convinced it was grossly undertaxed. It came into his mind that he had been similarly deceived over the gold-mines of Nubia. He would have understood the truth better had he made the uncomfortable journey to them: as it was he turned north at Syene, and never learnt the facts. The mines were exhausted, the task of retrieving gold had become insuperable. Thus the mines, reputed in Pharaonic times to produce a revenue of millions, were now only a penal settlement, peopled by criminals and political

¹ Sepulchral stele in British Museum, deciphered by S. R. Glanville Bevan, *loc. cit.*, p. 347.

offenders herded together irrespective of age and sex, and condemned to labour till death released them.¹

Yet Auletes' belief in the capacity of his subjects to bear higher taxation was not altogether wrong: nothing in the history of the Ptolemies is more remarkable than Egypt's power of recovering from periods of war and insurrection. A short spell of peace abroad and at home sufficed to inspirit equally the agriculturist and the man of business: a brief interregnum of war and insurrection to plunge both into despair. Thus prosperity perpetually alternated with depression, optimism with pessimism, and under Auletes Egypt tasted both experiences. Early in the reign a sequence of high Niles had benefited the cultivator, a reviving demand for local production the industrialist, and men talked hopefully of a golden age. A similar belief infected the king, and at his command the treasury established fresh monopolies and increased existing taxation. The country might have supported both burdens had not the greedy Auletes imprudently curtailed expenditure upon public services. It was a dangerous experiment: a device that only mortgaged the future, and presently Egypt awoke to the knowledge. Of reduced expenditure on public services, irrigation was one victim, defence another, currency a third. All three were extremely doubtful expedients, since Egypt's commercial pre-eminence depended upon an exportable surplus of cereals, an efficient fleet to escort the carriers, and the acceptance throughout the Aegean of Egyptian currency at its face value. That pre-eminence was now in danger of being sacrificed. Irrigation was neglected, and production therefore smaller, the fleet lay at anchor, unable to proceed to sea for lack of crews and stores, the Egyptian tetradrachm from continual debasement had sunk to a third of its standard weight, and the foreign bankers refused to accept coins minted in Alexandria. Extravagance on the part of the throne consummated the misfortune. It was a depraved and dissolute court: a nest of parasites, who paid for their board by likening the host to Dionysus. In this company sobriety was a crime, drunkenness a virtue, as Demetrius, an elderly man of letters, discovered to his shame. Accused of being sober at a Dionysiac revel, he made amends by presenting himself the following evening dressed in women's clothes, and capering drunkenly to the tinkling of cymbals. To the episode there was nearly an ugly aftermath. Supporting with ill grace increased taxation, Alexandria cried shame upon

¹ Diodorus, bk. iii., ch. 12.

a king who spent the proceeds on his own idle pleasure. There was even talk of the need of a new ruler, till news coming of the presence of two Seleucid princes in Rome, who claimed the throne of Egypt by virtue of descent from Euergetes II, checked the murmurs.

It was a disconcerting rumour. Born in wedlock, the pretenders, sons of Selene Cleopatra and Antiochus Grypus of Syria, possessed unexceptionable credentials, and Alexandria trembled lest it should still witness the coronation of a Seleucid as king of Egypt. It need have been under no apprehension on that score. If and when Rome intervened in Egyptian affairs, it would be not on behalf of a Syrian prince, but of a Roman pro-consul, and indeed at that very moment Crassus was intriguing to secure the appointment for himself. But if the two Seleucids gained nothing for their pains, Auletes at least recovered his senses. He recalled the counsel of Chairemon, his tutor, he thought of pleading his cause in person before the Senate, till further reflection bade him stay where he was. Alexandria liked nothing better than to depose and elect kings, and guessing his unpopularity, Auletes took no risks. He was thus driven to find agents who would defend his interests. There were no doubt men enough to spare in Rome for his purpose: a well-filled purse was the only passport they asked to see, and despite his extravagances, Auletes was in a position to satisfy curiosity on that point.

Yet in Rome his cause did not advance: bribes brought nothing but vague encouragement and vaguer promises, until, despairing of the professional politician, Auletes bethought himself of the ambitious soldier. Fate settled for him the choice of his man. Commissioned to clear the Mediterranean of the Cilician pirates, Pompey had come to the East in 67 B.C. It was a popular appointment, for Pompey's record as a soldier and statesman stood high. He had destroyed the Marian faction in Sicily and in Africa, broken Sertorius in Spain, and crushed Spartacus in Italy; as consul, he had restored to the Tribunes their ancient authority and admitted the middle classes to a share in the administration of justice. He was now to show his capacity in a new sphere of action, the policing of the seas. Piracy was seriously interfering with the food supply of Rome, and the confusion that followed the first Mithridatic war had lent the trade fresh life. Unscrupulous capitalists were financing its operations in the hope of profit, men of noble birth were embracing its opportunities in the expectation of adventure. From small beginnings the pirate fleet had risen to a thousand sail, and every little creek and haven from the

Bosphorus to Cyrenaica had become a port of call for the corsair. The pirates worked in groups, took their sailing directions from Coracesium in Cilicia, the headquarters of the fleet. Their depredations were a universal topic of conversation throughout the Aegean, and the peaceful master mariner remained in port rather than face risk of capture at sea. To the special perils of the Mediterranean, its lumpy seas and adverse winds, he was accustomed: but at the sight of the pirate galley with its "gilded masts at the stem, its sails woven of purple, and oars plated with silver,"¹ his heart sank. And not without reason, since he knew his fate if overtaken. The pirate made no prisoners. A ship's ladder was put out in mid-ocean and, wishing his captives a pleasant journey, the pirate commander left them to sink or swim. To destroy these pests of the sea, Pompey manned a fleet of five hundred sail, divided his command into thirteen squadrons, and systematically cleared the Mediterranean. He then steered for Cilicia, landed and seized Coracesium. Within three months he had accomplished his mission: the Cilician pirate had disappeared from the Aegean, and Pompey was marching against Mithridates.

Alexandria rejoiced at the news that the sea was again safe: for her once profitable carrying trade had almost disappeared. Rather than pay the ruinous insurance rates demanded by bankers, the exporter let his cereals rot on shore, and rather than risk capture of his ship at sea, the owner let the vessel lie idle in port. Misguided economy on the part of the state had brought about this disastrous state of affairs. Reduced to a few triremes, ill-manned and ill-found, the Egyptian fleet could no longer protect sea-going merchantmen or even the coasting trade. It was foolish policy, for Egypt had been an ideal operating base for the pirate commander. On its unfrequented sandy beaches he would haul up his galley, certain of being undisturbed, and there await news of the sailing of a merchant convoy. Then he would put to sea, swoop upon the quarry, and pilot the prize triumphantly to Cilicia. Less agreeable to the ear was a report that the Senate had extended Pompey's commission to include all Asia, and citizens wondered if this formidable Roman, having chased Mithridates first to the Euphrates and then back to the Black Sea, was likely to stop at the occupation of Asia Minor. The question was soon answered: leaving Mithridates to starve or surrender, he marched to Damascus, intending to round off his

¹ Plutarch's *Lives*, *Pompey*.

triumph by penetrating Arabia. It was Egypt's opportunity, and from Alexandria an embassy hurried to Syria, charged to present the king's good wishes, and beg Pompey's acceptance of "a crown of the value of four thousand pieces of gold."¹ Thinking himself the equal of a king, Pompey accepted the gift, thanked the embassy for their friendly words, hoped to make Ptolemy's acquaintance later. He was less pleased with "the golden ring of the value of five hundred talents," offered by Aristobulus, then struggling with his brother Hyrcanus for the possession of the throne of Judaea. It smacked of a bribe, and though Pompey might despoil a province, or accept from the hands of a reigning sovereign a token of regard, he did not sell his favour to petty chieftains. Yet circumstances forced him in the end to intervene in Judaea: he could not cross the Jordan while civil war raged on his right flank, and in Damascus he received the two brothers. The war was going well for neither, and the arrival of a company of Elders protesting that Judaea needed no ruler but "the High Priest of that God whom they worship," made Pompey's decision perplexing. In place of delivering judgement, he ordered all parties to cease dispute till he came to Jerusalem himself. Hyrcanus and the Elders accepted the decision: but Aristobulus, defying it, intrenched himself in Jerusalem. Pompey was the last Roman to brook an insult, and marched at once to the Holy City. It was a strong place, impossible of assault without battering rams, impracticable to starve into submission without mounted troops. Tyre supplied the first need, but Pompey was in straits about the second, till Auletes from Egypt obligingly provided 8,000 cavalry. It was an act of friendship that Pompey bore in mind when Auletes in turn needed his assistance.

Jerusalem fell: Aristobulus walked in Pompey's triumph, Judaea and Syria became provinces of Rome. Meanwhile Ptolemy Auletes was on the way to lose his throne: Egypt would neither forgive his increased taxation nor pardon his help to Rome. That mattered little to this king, proud of being an ally of Rome in the east, and of the black looks and muttered imprecations that followed his appearances in Alexandria. Auletes took no notice. Wider knowledge of the world would have spared him that mistake: as sensitive as Alexandria, Rome was already resenting Pompey's insolent interpretation of the terms of his commission. Syria, Palestine and Arabia were outside them: Caesar, Lucullus,

¹ Josephus *Antiquities*, bk. xiv., ch. 3, div. 1.

Crassus and Cicero were in no mind to gild a rival's triumph. To check Pompey, Caesar proposed the appointment in Italy of a commissioner with powers as wide as those Pompey enjoyed in Asia: but the scheme miscarried, and Caesar went off to Spain. He returned in 60 B.C. to find Pompey, puzzled by the universal indifference to his achievements, also in Rome. Presently the gathering storm burst. Instigated by Crassus and Cicero, the Senate refused to ratify Pompey's decrees abroad, or to provide land at home for his returning legions, while Lucullus, whom he had superseded in Asia, and Crassus, always bitter towards him, denounced his spoliation of conquered territory. The more cautious Caesar saw the peril of pushing rivalry too far: he proposed a friendly alliance with Pompey, and induced Crassus to join it. Thus came about the formation of the so-called first triumvirate, wherein Pompey undertook to secure Caesar's election as consul, Caesar to persuade the Senate to ratify Pompey's acts in Asia, and Crassus to win support of the moneyed classes. It was a combination that boded ill for Ptolemy Auletes, still awaiting the Senate's recognition of his kingship. In place of one Roman, he had now to deal with three.

All was to do over again, and Auletes once more reviewed the situation. Of the triumvirate, Pompey seemed the declining, Caesar the rising star, and to Caesar the shameless King of Egypt now addressed himself. In Rome it was now more than ever a question of money: without private fortune, an honest man found office a short cut to beggary, and no citizen knew that truth better than Caesar. He had borrowed extravagantly, he had spent recklessly, and he was now at the end of his tether. A pro-praetorship of Spain had lightened the burden, but his resources were still strained, and bankers chary of making advances. The Roman's predicament was Auletes' opportunity, and he cautiously inquired the cost of Caesar's patronage. It was six thousand talents, and though Auletes winced at the figure he paid the sum. But Caesar's word was as good as his bond. Once satisfied of his client's solvency, he persuaded the Senate to recognize Auletes as King of Egypt, "ally and friend of the Roman people." The title was hardly worth the price. "Ally" of Rome Ptolemy might be, if the Senate needed his assistance: "friend" never, as Auletes himself presently discovered.

Within a few months, Publius Clodius, a recently elected tribune, was advocating the annexation of Cyprus. It was a dishonourable bid for popularity: in possession of Albania, Macedonia, Greece,

Spain, Cyrene, Pontus, Armenia, Syria, Judaea and Arabia, the Republic scarcely needed to poach on the domain of its latest "ally and friend." But Clodius had also a private end in view: a ruthless and vindictive man, he was determined to ruin all who crossed his path. Cicero and Cato the younger, who had charged him with profligacy, were two victims; Ptolemy Auletes, who had rashly refused to ransom him from Cilician pirates, a third. Cicero was the first to feel Clodius' vengeance: abandoned by Caesar, Cicero fled to Greece, and Clodius turned on Cato and Ptolemy. With a heavy heart Cato, at the bidding of a subservient Senate, sailed to take possession of Cyprus, a commission that Clodius hoped would stop for ever his enemy's everlasting prattle about virtue. At Rhodes, the Roman delayed in the hope of persuading the ruler of Cyprus, the younger brother of Auletes, to submit to the will of the Republic: promising the victim as compensation to confer on him the office of high priest of Paphos for life. It was indignantly refused: preferring death to shame, the unhappy Ptolemy took poison. Distracted by the loss of their king-ruler, the Cypriots offered no opposition to a Roman occupation, and Cato sequestered "the royal treasure of plate, tables, precious stones, and purple, all of which was to be turned into cash."¹ Always the most scrupulous of men, he sought no personal advantage. He supervised the sale of the treasure, noted the names of the buyers, audited the auctioneer's accounts. Unfortunately these accounts and their duplicates were lost at sea, and, returning to Rome, Cato had a struggle to convince the Senate that he had not connived at their disappearance in order to cover his own plunder of the island.²

Indignation in Alexandria, already heated, boiled over when Cato's commission became public, and blaming Auletes for the loss of Cyprus, the capital roughly bade him quit Egypt. The king did not wait for the command to be repeated. He took ship for Rome in 58 B.C., leaving his wife and five children as hostages. Outside the harbour he altered his course for Rhodes, where Cato was: anticipating, as "ally and friend of the Roman people," sympathy and encouragement from that virtuous man. Neither were forthcoming: coldly Cato recommended the king to return to Alexandria to reform his manner of life, and intrigue no more in Rome. The counsel was wasted: Auletes had set his hopes on

¹ Plutarch's *Lives*, *Cato the Younger*.

² Dio Cassius, *Roman History*, bk. xxxix., ch. 23.

Caesar, and to Rome he went. He was too late. Caesar was campaigning in Gaul, his supporters would not meddle in the Egyptian business. The outlook was gloomy, and but for the sympathy of Pompey and the backing of Rabirius Postumus, an adventurous capitalist, Auletes would have despaired of regaining his kingdom. To add to his trouble, a hundred notable citizens of Alexandria, charged to inform the Senate of the deposition of the king and the accession of Berenice, his eldest daughter, crossed to Italy. They never reached Rome: a band of desperadoes hired by Auletes waylaid them, and only a handful survived to tell the tale. That rigid upholder of law, Cicero, had no doubt of Auletes' complicity. "He took gold," he wrote to one of his many correspondents, "to give to the slaves of Lucius Luceius, who caused Dio of Alexandria to be slain when Dio was dining in Luceius' house. It is a great crime," he added thoughtfully, "to intrigue against ambassadors."¹ But Rome was divided on the point.

Shocked by the tale, many senators, denouncing the crime, clamoured for the arrest and punishment of the author: others, in Auletes' pay, cried that Rome was bound in honour to assist "an ally and friend." Distractedly the Senate consulted the Sibylline books, and in them discovered a verse that bore upon the problem. "If the King of Egypt comes requesting aid," it ran, "refuse him not friendship, nor yet succour him with great force." The oracle was not very helpful on this occasion, and discussion raged fiercely over the interpretation of the word "friendship." One party urged that it obliged Rome to re-establish Auletes on the throne, a second that it meant no more than the entertainment of an uninvited and unwelcome guest for the shortest time possible. And when the Senate decided in favour of the first alternative, a fresh perplexity confronted them. Who was to carry out the task? Both Pompey and Crassus coveted the appointment, and the trial of Milo, a henchman of the first, demonstrated the bitterness of the rivalry. Clodius, the prosecutor, ally of Crassus, an enemy of Pompey, set light to the smouldering fire. "Who is starving you?" he apostrophized the audience, and his hearers shouted back "Pompey." "Who desires to go to Egypt?" he asked, and the listeners cried: "Pompey." "Who are we going to send?" was his last question, and a roar of "Crassus, Crassus," was the answer.

¹ Cicero, *Pro Caelio*, xxi.

Thinking no more of Egypt and her king's business, Caesar had gone off to Gaul, and there echoes of the rivalry that imperilled the continuance of the triumvirate reached him. He summoned a conference at Lucca in May, 56 B.C., to settle the future. At it Pompey and Crassus buried their animosity and abandoned their private designs upon Egypt, and there the pair undertook to charge Aulus Gabinius, pro-consul of Syria, to re-establish the king of Egypt on his throne at a price to be divided among the triumvirate. Meanwhile Crassus was to reduce Parthia, Pompey to remain in Rome, and Caesar to have Gaul. But hardly had the conference ended than hesitation fastened on Pompey. Caesar's counsel to ignore the Senate in the Egyptian business was hazardous, and if the campaign miscarried, he (Pompey) would be the scapegoat. He was also doubtful of the choice of Gabinius: Lentullus Spinther, pro-consul of Cilicia, was more discreet, and, pushed by Pompey, Cicero sounded Spinther. "You with your hand on Cilicia and Cyprus, could occupy Alexandria and Egypt. It is for your own dignity and that of the state that having placed the king at Ptolemais, you should proceed with the fleet and army to Alexandria, and having restored peace and left a garrison, Ptolemy may go back to his kingdom, as the Senate voted, and without a host, as people scrupulous on the point of religion declared was the order of the Sibyl."¹ But Spinther decided against it.

Conscious of these hesitations, Auletes in despair travelled to Ephesus to confer with Gabinius, while Alexandria, well posted in the matter, urged Berenice to forestall her father by taking a husband capable of defending her rights. It was not easy to discover an appropriate bridegroom. Marriage with a brother was impracticable, since the elder of the pair was still an infant in arms, and the royal "kinsmen" could only suggest one or other of the two grandsons of Selene Cleopatra and Antiochus Grypus of Syria. Loud protests followed the advice: matters had come to a pretty pass, snarled the humiliated Alexandrian, when a queen of Egypt had to look to a province of Rome for a husband. Yet the marriage might have gone through but for Aulus Gabinius' opposition. That pro-consul, wrangling at this moment with the father over the price of his personal services, had no intention of allowing any match likely to prejudice his client's restoration to the throne of Egypt, and he refused point blank to allow the bridegroom to leave Syria.

Meanwhile Alexandria had found another candidate, a certain

¹ Cicero, *Ad Fam.*, i. vii. 45.

Seleucus, who boasted of a shadowy relationship with the house of Seleucus. He was a poor choice, so common in appearance and vulgar in speech that within a few hours of his landing in Egypt he went by the odious name of "the saltfish-monger." The honeymoon lasted less than a week: marking Berenice's aversion, and presumably at her command, the palace guards strangled the bridegroom. The crime only increased the prevailing anxiety. The father, Ptolemy Auletes, was reported to be in Syria, Gabinius to be concentrating his legions, and despairing of finding a candidate of royal descent, the "kinsmen" of the court invited Archelaus, son of Archelaus, a distinguished lieutenant of Mithridates, to come to Alexandria.

It was a partnership of two vigorous young rulers, inspired with a healthy desire to rebuild a kingdom shattered by scandal and dissension. While Archelaus renewed the navy and reformed the army, Berenice laboured to conciliate a people alienated by exaction and misgovernment. She made advances to the priests; she repaired some temples at the expense of the state, she granted to others the right of asylum. That right was a very precious privilege, the special prerogative, sparingly used, of the crown. Breaking with tradition, Berenice now bestowed it liberally, and the gratified priests acknowledged the debt by urging their congregations to rally round the queen. "From existing asylums," Euergetes had reminded Egypt, "no one can be taken by force," and the provincial police grumbled at any extension of the privilege to insignificant shrines. It was certainly hard upon that arm of the law, since the only hope of arresting an absconder from justice who contrived to reach a temple before his pursuers lay in persuading him that the hue and cry was over. The ruse frequently was successful. The police had their spies within the temple, their guards without, and the first step the simple-minded fugitive took towards freedom was usually his last. "Watch them," one police officer wrote to his agent in the Serapeum, "and if these persons go out, let me know and I will be with you. There will be a reward of three talents for you, and you will do us a favour."¹

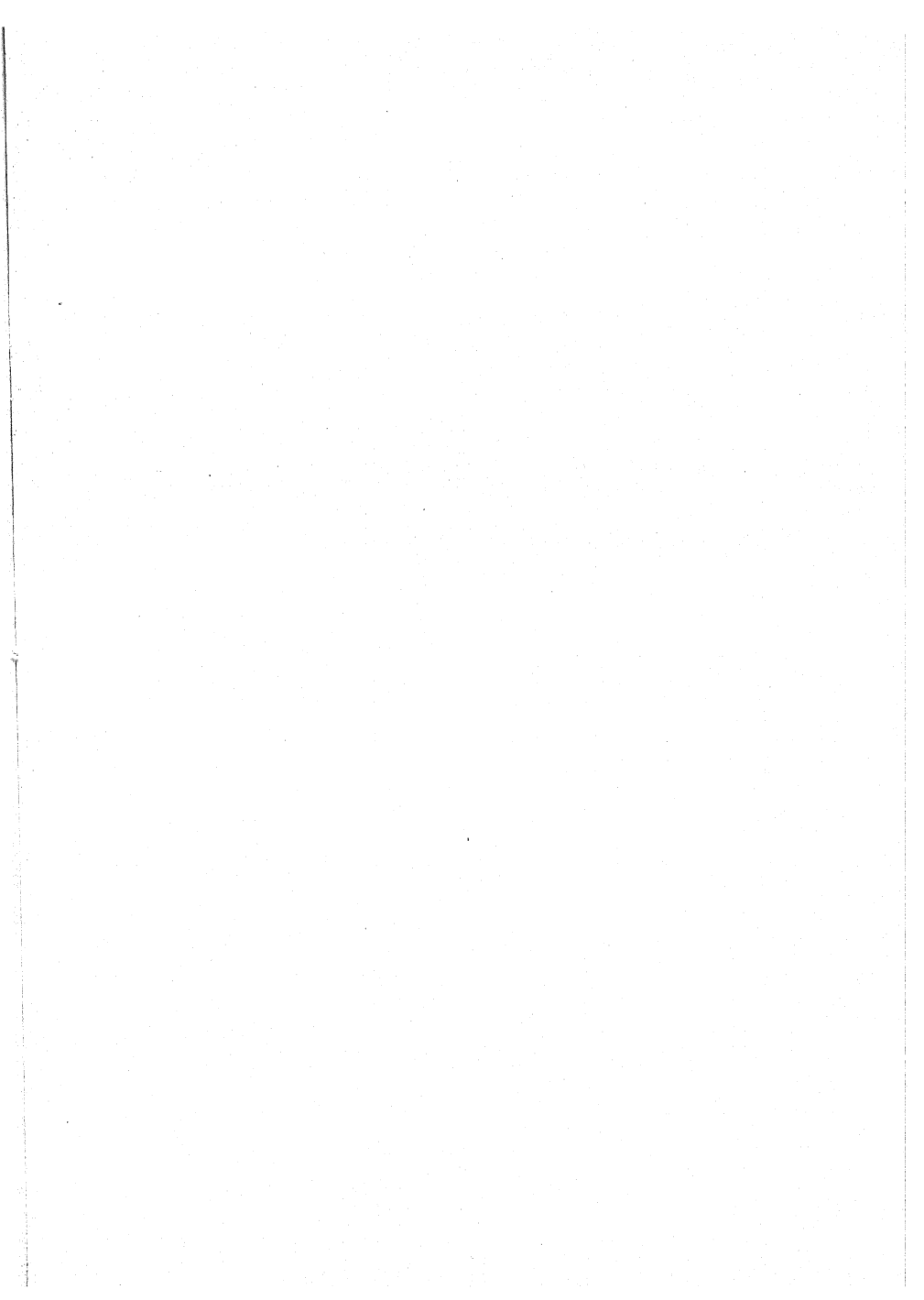
At the last moment Gabinius hesitated. Before a pro-consul could leave his province or engage in war, he must have authority to do so, and Gabinius rightly thought that the Senate would not pardon a descent upon Egypt. But the adventure was too tempting.

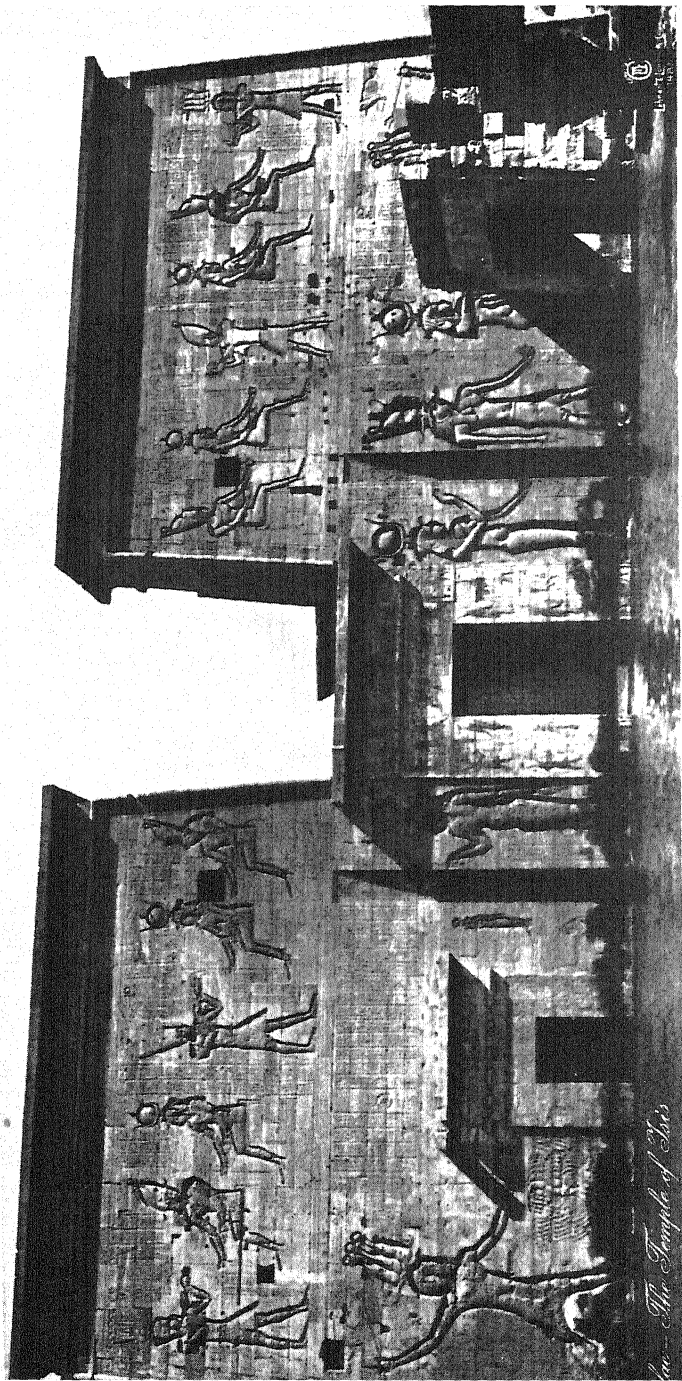
¹ G. Lefevre, *Annales du Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte*, No. 19. Cairo, 1920.

Auletes had promised him a thousand talents the day he re-occupied the throne, and Gabinius could not resist that inducement. So light-heartedly he gave the signal to march. Mark Antony, his master of horse, led the van, Gabinius followed with the infantry, and Auletes leisurely rode in the rear. Pelusium fell, Alexandria capitulated, and Auletes re-entered his capital in the year 55 B.C. No mercy was shown to Berenice and her husband, and in prison they met a common death: a mournful ending to a reign that had begun auspiciously. Intimidated by Gabinius' soldiers, mostly fierce Gauls and Germans, Alexandria offered no protest, lifted no finger to save their king and queen: "Always ready to assume a bold front and speak out their thoughts," caustically observes Dio Cassius, "but for war and its terrors the Alexandrians are utterly useless."¹ And certainly their behaviour throughout Ptolemaic times justifies the judgement.

Leaving Lucius Licinius and two legions to stand between the king and his subjects, Gabinius went back to Syria—disconcerted by the news that Rome was buzzing with gossip concerning his escapade, and empty handed in that his talents were still unpaid. Auletes had begged for time, and reluctantly Gabinius conceded it. He had better have compounded with his debtor, since what money the latter could extract from Alexandria he retained. Worse befell him in Rome. Acquitted of a charge of treason, he was found guilty of taking bribes and fined ten thousand talents, despite Auletes' word as a king that he had paid the pro-consul nothing for his assistance. Conscious of their virtue, the Senate licked their lips and cast about for a fresh victim. Pompey and Crassus, both deeply dipped in the scandal, were too powerful to impeach: Rabirius Postumus, Auletes' banker in Italy, was an easier prey. But the banker was out of reach, endeavouring in Alexandria to recover his money, and there the disappointed Senate had to leave him. Incidentally the banker got little for the pains of the voyage. Vowing that he had no funds to meet his debts, Auletes offered Rabirius the office of dioecetes in compensation, and the Roman understood that he might repay himself at the expense of Alexandria. He did so, too greedily: his exactions produced an uproar and, glad of the excuse, Auletes threw Rabirius into prison. He would have executed this inconvenient creditor in the knowledge that dead men tell no tales, but for fear that Rome would call him to account for the crime. So he adopted a more subtle way of getting

¹ Dio Cassius, *loc. cit.*, bk. xxxix., ch. 58.





Ptolemy Auletes smiting his enemies in the presence of the gods of Philae
(Temple of Philae)

rid of the victim. A postern gate was left open, and Rabirius, naked and in fear of his life, stole back to Italy. There justice overtook him as it had earlier overtaken Gabinius. He was tried and condemned on the charge of accepting an office of profit in Egypt without permission of the Senate. Public opinion applauded the judgement: in the eyes of Rome a renegade still deserved no mercy. Yet thanks to Pompey's intervention, Gabinius escaped punishment. Cicero was shocked. "You ask me how I can tolerate such evils?" he inquired of his friend Atticus. "Well enough," he continued, "seeing we have lost not only the juice and blood, but even the colour and shape of a republic."¹

Warned by the example, more humble creditors forbore to press their claims, and Auletes, as mean as he was dishonest, ignored them. An ignoble king and dishonourable man, he died as he had lived, unlamented and impenitent. None the less in the closing years of life he sought to obliterate his crimes and follies by commanding the Egyptian priesthood to record on temple walls his name and reign. Philae hastened to obey, and on one of its many pylons dutifully incised a relief depicting this Ptolemy, protected by the gods, smiting his enemies. It was a fantastic inspiration, for Auletes had never drawn a sword in anger.

Only at the last did he think of the future of his five children. The outlook was gloomy unless the Republic guaranteed the succession, and in that knowledge he addressed himself to the Roman people. On his death-bed he dictated his testament, inviting the Senate to deposit it in the Republic's archives. His will was explicit: it left the kingdom of Egypt jointly to his daughter Cleopatra, the seventh of the name, and his son Ptolemy: he wished the two to become husband and wife, and asked the Senate to bless the marriage. They were his last words: he died in the year 51 B.C.

¹ Cicero, *Atticus IV*, 16.



CHAPTER XIII

CLEOPATRA

51 B.C. to 30 B.C.

CLEOPATRA, seventh of the name, took her seat on the throne: Can imperious girl of eighteen or nineteen years of age, impatient of advice, intolerant of opposition. Her life was a perpetual romance, her reign an endless adventure, and if she was neither a very honourable queen nor a very virtuous woman, the deficiencies were due as much to the circumstances of the times as to her own follies. The interest, indeed, she holds for posterity springs partly from her dramatic relations with two great figures of the Roman world, and partly from the accident that first Plutarch and then Shakespeare elected to immortalize her memory. Of her quality and appearance history tells us little. Plutarch speaks of her learning and her gift of tongues, Cassius of her "surpassing beauty"; but whether her erudition was profound or superficial, whether she was tall or short, dark or fair, posterity cannot tell. No authentic portrait of this queen exists,¹ but the coins of the period hardly substantiate Dio's enthusiastic judgement. In them the upper half of the face is attractive; the lower, with its sensual mouth and aggressive chin, more doubtful. Be this as it may, she must have been a seductive and entertaining woman, or she could not have won and kept the affection of those two inconstant men, Julius Caesar and Mark Antony.

She began badly: her father was hardly in his grave before Cleopatra was quarrelling with Pothinus, to whom Auletes on his return from Rome had indolently committed the cares of government. It was an error of judgement on Cleopatra's part: she was an inexperienced girl, Pothinus a subtle Greek, who had Achilles the commander-in-chief and Theodotus, a philosopher popular with the Alexandrian proletariat, in his pocket. Cleopatra rushed on her fate, insisting that she must rule alone until her little brother Ptolemy, co-heir under the father's will, was old enough to share the throne. Pothinus ridiculed the claim of a girl ignorant enough to ignore the prejudice against feminine rule. That a regency was necessary

¹ The head in the British Museum, reproduced in many text-books, is now considered as the portrait of a Syrian woman.

during the minority of the heir-male was reasonable enough, and provided he was its president in the interests of the boy, he would accept Cleopatra as a member. That impertinence widened the breach, and unhappily there was no arbiter to close the difference. Ptolemaic philosophy of government was still Pharonic: Egypt was "the king's land," its people were the humble servants of the throne, and in a conception of that type there was obviously no room for representative institutions. Alexandria was without a boule, or even an ecclesia, the familiar council and assembly of every petty Greek city-state. From time to time the throne made known its wishes by proclamation and decree, but no debate or question was permitted on their wisdom. Municipal officers were nominees of the throne, the governor was a "kinsman" of the court. It was a strange anomaly: a city built by Greeks for Greeks could only express its opinion by tumult and riot. Once again Alexandria was within measurable distance of battle. Indignant at the confusion that reigned in the government, the people bade the queen and the minister either live in amity, or give way to others who would. It was a warning neither dared ignore. Tacitly the two consented to divide authority: Cleopatra took charge of foreign relations, Pothinus of domestic business. The truce was impermanent. Both needed time to consolidate their resources: Pothinus through his colleague Achilles to make sure of the army, Cleopatra to establish relations with Pompey, known to be in possession of her father's will. The respite profited Cleopatra in other ways. Much of the past, hitherto obscure to her, was now plain. She comprehended the causes that had led to her father's exile, she understood the reasoning that led him to seek the patronage of Rome. With Pompey's assistance she would rid herself of Pothinus, and then accept or reject as consort her brother, as she thought fit.

Trouble among the Roman troops stationed in Alexandria upset the expectation: Bibulus, a new pro-consul of Syria, recalled the garrison. Both officers and men murmured at the news. They had found agreeable female company in Alexandria to solace their exile, and discipline had sadly deteriorated. Such was the situation when Bibulus' two sons arrived in camp to conduct the garrison to Syria. They read Bibulus' orders, they gave the word to march. No man obeyed, and the parade swore they would not move a step for any pro-consul. The messengers appealed to the commander, but he was no more anxious to quit Egypt than his men, and he counselled the brothers to go back to Syria. In place they taunted the legions with cowardice: a rash indictment that brought about their death.

Half a dozen truculent Gauls broke the ranks and slew the young men on the spot. The troops had left Cleopatra out of their calculation. Bibulus was a friend of Pompey, and it was an opportunity to remind Pompey that she, too, was his friend. She arrested the assassins, sent them in irons to Bibulus. Nothing came of her injudicious interference: she made an enemy of the garrison, and achieved no thanks from Pompey. Still she persevered, and later presented Pompey with a squadron of sixty triremes, a supply of corn and a handsome contribution in cash. A wave of indignation swept over Alexandria as the citizens watched the departure of the squadron. What had Egypt to do with the private rivalries of Rome, snarled Pothinus' following: would these Ptolemies never learn, whispered the queen's supporters, that of all patrons a Roman was the least grateful?

Certainly no one could predict the outcome of the rivalry of Caesar and Pompey, a rivalry that had burst into conflict. They were tolerably well matched: if Caesar in Gaul had at his back an army toughened by ten years campaigning, Pompey in Rome enjoyed the support of the aristocratic and moneyed classes. Could these classes have had their way, they would have nominated Pompey as dictator, but public opinion was not prepared for so drastic a course. Memories of Sulla's dictatorship and its aftermath still lingered, and Rome did not desire a second experience of that type of rule. Thus the leaders were content to elect Pompey to be consul without colleague, and invest him with supreme command on land and sea. In this wise peace and war between the pair trembled in the balance, while a vacillating Senate prattled of negotiation. It was too late: hurrying across the Alps, Caesar was threatening Rome. The news stung the Senate into action: Caesar was declared a public enemy, and Pompey defender of the Republic. The latter counted up his resources. They were meagre enough. Of the ten legions under his command, eight were in Spain, and to give battle at home to Caesar he needed at least six. There was no time to raise new levies in Italy, much less to find ships and man them, and his thought travelled to Greece and Asia Minor. There he would recruit an army and muster a fleet, re-cross the Adriatic, and recapture Italy. Hurriedly he left Rome, while Caesar, fording the Rubicon, set off in pursuit. He reached Brundisium too late: aided by a favourable wind, Pompey was half way to Greece.

Unable to follow from lack of transport, Caesar departed for Spain, crying: "I go to Spain to fight an army without a general,

and afterwards I go to the East to fight a general without an army." That conviction was quite erroneous: occupying Epirus, Pompey was collecting a force likely to be stronger than any the enemy could ferry across the Adriatic. More difficult was the creation of a fleet. Liburnia, the modern Croatia, abounded in swift-sailing light-draught craft, but for heavier vessels Pompey had to look to the Aegean. So Scipio, his father-in-law, and Gnaeus Pompey, his son, set off to borrow or hire fighting ships. Picking up a few at Tyre and at Rhodes, the mission came to Alexandria. It was a more promising field: even if fifty years earlier Lucullus, bent on a similar quest, had departed empty-handed, Pompey's commissioners at all events met with better fortune. Perhaps Gnaeus' handsome face and pleasant manners struck Cleopatra's fancy, perhaps Scipio's honeyed compliments tickled her ears: whatever the reason, some sixty ships with five hundred Galatian marines on board sailed to Epirus. It was Pothinus' chance, and he consulted his confederates Achilles and Theodotus. Both men urged him to strike, both swore to support him. But a whisper of the plot reached the palace, and Cleopatra bade her guards stand to arms. The command met with no response and not a soldier stirred. Pothinus had been beforehand, and the palace guards took their orders now only from him. Thus for Cleopatra there was no alternative but flight, and she fled to the Thebaid. There she found in the viceroy a friend, who helped her to reach Syria by way of Arabia. In Syria she raised a heterogeneous army of tribesmen, bandits, runaway slaves, and Roman deserters, and within a few weeks she was on the march to Egypt. But her intention was known, and at Pelusium she discovered young Ptolemy, the co-heir, barring the way. A pause followed: neither sister nor brother dared push matters to an extremity, and each confidently expected the other to withdraw.

Meanwhile on the other side of the Mediterranean Caesar and Pompey had come to grips. Having secured Spain and his election as consul, Caesar had crossed the Adriatic with the vanguard, and in Epirus was impatiently awaiting the passage of his main body. Its belated arrival permitted Pompey to come to the relief of Dyrrachium, the modern Durazzo, and Caesar's siege of the fortress did not prosper. His situation became uncertain. Inferior on the sea, he had lost touch with Rome, and the news that Pompey was being reinforced caused him to recast his strategy and withdraw from Dyrrachium. He marched south hoping to intercept the reinforcements, but fortune failed him, and joining hands with Scipio, Pompey gave battle to his enemy at Pharsalus, 9th August, 48 B.C.

It was a confused battle that ended in the triumph of quality over numbers, of genius over mediocrity. The tenth legion were the heroes of the day: their resistance to two furious cavalry charges turned what at the beginning had seemed defeat into victory. Pompey's Asiatic levies wavered and fled, and seeing the day was lost, Pompey himself galloped from the field. At Amphipolis he held a council of war, and his friends urged him to make a second stand in Macedonia. But his nerve was gone: he declared his preference for Asia, and spoke vaingloriously of recruiting a fresh army in Cilicia. It was a ruse to put the Mediterranean between Caesar and himself: he stopped at Lesbos to pick up his wife Cornelia and Sextus his son, but he did not drop anchor till he thought himself beyond pursuit. Once again he discussed the future: speaking no more of armies and fleets, but only anxious to discover a refuge that Caesar would not dare penetrate. His companions, with no more stomach for fighting than their leader, agreed, and debated only what port to make for. Opinion was divided, some favouring Numidia, others Syria, a few even inhospitable Parthia. Syria was an inspiration that lightened Pompey's gloom. Of the province he had once been pro-consul, and there if anywhere he felt certain of a welcome. It was a melancholy illusion. Antiochia, the capital, refused to receive him, and with a heavy heart he steered for Egypt. At sea, thinking it undignified to land on Egyptian soil a fugitive without money or a guard, he altered his course and made for Cyprus. An accommodating banker on the island provided him with funds, a sympathetic governor with a company of troops, and Pompey sailed for Alexandria, confident that the children of Ptolemy Auletes would repay the hospitality he had once afforded their father in Rome. It was disappointing to find the port closed. At the entrance a guardship rode at anchor, whose commander bade Pompey first obtain the king's authority if he wished to land. "Where is Ptolemy?" asked the fugitive. "At Pelusium," was the discouraging answer, and Pompey sailed on.

Meanwhile news of Pompey's flight from Pharsalus had reached Pelusium, and within that fortress a council of war was hotly debating whether the fugitive should be permitted to land, or bidden to go elsewhere. Of the assembly only the aged Acoreus, the high priest of Memphis, pleaded the sacred duty of hospitality. He was on his feet urging the cause of Pompey, when Pompey's vessels hove in sight. A shout went up: "Are we to adopt Pompey when all the world is forsaking him?" and the discomfited Acoreus hastily sat down. To the question Pothinus boldly answered: "Let Pompey

find a refuge elsewhere." But in this Greek's mind a darker design was shaping. At Pharsalus Pompey's star had set, Caesar's was rising, and prudence bade Egypt earn then the gratitude of the conqueror by making an end of the victim. He whispered his advice in the ear of the king, and young Ptolemy nodded his approval. The council of war broke up: Achilles and Lucius Septimius, an ex-tribune of Gabinius' legions left to garrison Alexandria, volunteered to be the executioners. The pair set off in a common fishing boat, accosted the trireme, and welcomed Pompey to Egypt. He hesitated, suspicious of the speakers' smooth words and of their crazy craft, until Achilles blamed the shallowness of the beach for having to land a distinguished guest so meanly. With a sigh Pompey dropped into the boat, muttering as he took his seat beside Achilles Sophocles' line: "He who resorts to a tyrant becomes his slave." To Cornelia, preparing to follow, he cried: "Wait, wife, watch from afar, and see what befalls me on shore." They were his last words to the ship: bidding the rowers lay to their oars, Achilles was steering for the beach. A silence fell on the company: no one spoke or stirred. Septimius stood erect as if on parade, and by that Pompey knew him to have served in a Roman legion. He looked closely at him. "Do I not know you, comrade?" he said quietly, and the other nodded carelessly. Pompey sighed again, and drawing from his sleeve the address he proposed to deliver to Ptolemy, conned its words. Seeing him occupied, Septimius stealthily loosed his sword and felt its point. The boat grounded, and rising to disembark, Pompey saw the blade flash in the sunlight. He held his breath and closed his eyes as Septimius lunged at his victim's heart. The stroke missed the mark, but Pompey sank senseless across the thwart. Then the villainous Achilles took a step forward, stabbed and stabbed again till Pompey drew his last breath. Leaping ashore, the assassin set Pompey's head on a pike and displayed the trophy triumphantly to the king, while the rowers threw the mangled body into the sea. There it tossed to and fro, the sport of every wavelet, till Philip, a freedman, and Cordus, an old legionary, creeping to the shore after dark, built a humble pyre and burnt the remains. So perished Pompey, surnamed the Great, whom "Fortune had held in her arms so long, and then destroyed with a single blow."¹

A few days later, Caesar landed in Alexandria. Leaving the infantry to follow him from Pharsalus, he had ridden hard to Sestus on the Hellespont. There he halted in the expectation that

¹ Appian, bk. ii., Lucan, bk. viii., and Plutarch's *Pompey* tell the story.

his legions would overtake him. They were too far behind, and impatiently he crossed the straits in crazy shore-boats. Midway in the passage he gave himself up for lost. An enemy squadron bore down on him, and but for the treachery of its commander he must have been made prisoner. But over Caesar a special providence seemed to watch: the commander asked for forgiveness and placed the triremes at his service. At Rhodes Caesar learnt of Pompey's intention to seek refuge in Egypt, and set a course for Alexandria. Three days later he was off the port, and Theodotus, bearing the head of Pompey and Pompey's signet ring, hurried on board to welcome the victor of Pharsalus.

To Theodotus' recital Caesar listened gloomily: he deplored the death of the noble Pompey, he shuddered at the duplicity that had accomplished it. Keeping the signet ring, he ordered the head to be decently interred in the temple of Nemesis, and bade Theodotus tell him of the welfare of Ptolemy Auletes' children. It was then only that he learnt of the dispute between brother and sister, of Pothinus' intervention on the boy's behalf, of the sister's flight from Alexandria, and of her reappearance at the head of an army outside Pelusium. The story interested but also embarrassed Caesar. On the one hand, his presence was urgently needed in Rome: on the other, seeing that Auletes had put his children under the care of the Republic, it was his duty as consul to reconcile them before leaving Egypt. Moreover, he had another consideration in mind. He had covenanted to restore Ptolemy Auletes to the throne in return for a handsome bribe; but he had never seen the money, and he thought it only reasonable that the children should honour their father's word.

The first to land were the consular lictors, and the people of Alexandria stared curiously at the rods and axes they bore, the mysterious insignia of their calling. At their heels marched a cohort or two of Italian soldiers—very different beings in face and bearing from the uncouth German and Galatian conscripts of Gabinius—and then followed Caesar. The lictors cleared a lane through the gaping spectators and Caesar passed into the palace enclosure. It had a deserted air: but for Arsinoë and a baby brother, and a few servants, the royal apartments were empty. Caesar did not intrude upon their privacy: his eye had already fallen upon a handsome pavilion, and this he made his headquarters. This settled, he told Theodotus to return to Pelusium and inform the king and his sister that Caesar desired their presence in Alexandria. While awaiting their arrival he inspected the city. It had grown in wealth and in

area since Scipio Africanus, sixty years earlier, had paid his visit. Temples and public buildings had multiplied, the population was greater and more heterogeneous. Every district seemed to speak a different tongue from its neighbour. Greek was the official and business language: Egyptian the most commonly heard. Through the busy streets Caesar took to sauntering: a tall and handsome figure of a man, whose frank greetings and courteous manners commanded respect and even admiration. His dress was always plain, a toga fringed with the purple stripe of the equestrian order loosely girt about the waist: his only ornament a signet ring engraved with a representation of Venus Victrix, marking his patrician descent. There was no corner of the city or quay of the port that he did not explore: at the water's edge he would stand for hours watching the corn-ships loading. It was an operation that set him musing on the Republic and its food-supplies: a matter that had baffled consuls and senators for a generation and more. Every year the problem became more complex, the solution more elusive. Devastated by continuous civil war, Italy could no longer feed her people. Land was going out of cultivation, the peasant was producing only enough to satisfy his own needs. In Rome famine had been kept off by lavish purchases of corn, and its free distribution by wealthy office-holders; but that process could not continue indefinitely, and Roman needs required more drastic procedure. To Caesar's practical mind the remedy was further expansion: the incorporation within the Republic of fresh corn-producing territory, and Egypt, one great granary, was an obvious victim.

From the quays he would saunter to the Mouseion and the Library: discuss philosophy and history at the first, pronounce judgement upon the manuscripts of the second. He was competent to talk with scholars on their own ground and advise aspiring writers: erudite and cultured, he spoke as he wrote, elegantly and unaffectedly. "Who of the orators, who practise nothing but oratory, do you prefer before Caesar?" inquired Cornelius Nepos of his readers. "Avoid as you would a rock the strange and unfamiliar word," was Caesar's own counsel to the aspiring author. But discussion was often a waste of time: for many years the Mouseion had produced no original thinker or writer, and Caesar was never interested in the second-rate. Perhaps the moment was unpropitious for philosophy and letters, and Caesar preferred to wander in and out of the temples and public buildings of the city, admiring the airy elegance of some, the spacious proportions of others. Among the last was the handsome shrine of Serapis in the Rhacotis

quarter. From a little distance he would stare curiously at a vast congregation of people joining in the temple service. It was a bizarre and exotic ritual. Facing the pious worshippers, the high priest would sprinkle water with one hand, extend with the other a pan of living fire, to symbolize the river and the sun, divine agents of creation. A longing at such moments to know more of mysterious Egypt, to explore the Nile from mouth to source, to penetrate the forests of Ethiopia, would fasten on Caesar. But the ambition would quickly vanish: winter was approaching, and once he had fulfilled his duty as consul, return to Rome he must.

He was becoming even a little anxious: no word had come from the young king or his sister, and Theodotus had not returned from Pelusium. He was also conscious of a certain unfriendliness in Alexandria. His lictors had often to elbow their way through the streets. Peaceful legionaries abroad after dark met with insult if nothing worse, and Caesar himself had frequently met with scant courtesy. Apprehensive of trouble, he doubled the guards, ordered from Asia Minor reinforcements. They were prudent measures, for bitterness was growing, and Alexandria angrily asking how many more weeks must citizens pay and feed these uninvited guests. Hospitality in their opinion had its limits, and Caesar was exceeding them. His treatment of the squadron lent by Cleopatra to Pompey increased the bitterness. Released from further service, the admiral had joyfully sailed home, only to discover his ships had become in fact a prize of war. He and the crews were landed, a harbour-guard of legionaries sent aboard, and the squadron moored inside of Caesar's triremes. "Treachery," muttered the Alexandrian, exasperated at the sight, and his temper rose.

Travelling leisurely, young King Ptolemy, accompanied by Pothinus, at last returned to Alexandria, and Caesar read the boy a gentle homily. He spoke of the wickedness of family quarrels, of his intention to adjudicate between brother and sister, and asked pointedly why Cleopatra had not come with him. Confused by the questions, the boy bade Pothinus answer them, and Caesar turned roughly upon the Greek. He complained of the weevilled wheat and rancid oil issued to his troops, he reminded Pothinus that Egypt had not honoured Ptolemy Auletes' obligations, and asked again why Cleopatra had not come with her brother. Pothinus answered sulkily that he had other business to transact than issue rations, that he must first scrutinize the items of the late king's debt before meeting it, that he did not control

Cleopatra's movements. It was clear, in short, that Pothinus did not intend to offer the queen a safe-conduct, and since Caesar would not give judgement till he had heard Cleopatra's story, he forbade Pothinus to leave Alexandria.

Meanwhile, ignorant of Caesar's hesitation, Cleopatra was debating her course. A loyal servant had acquainted her with Caesar's arrival and a spy in Pelusium of her brother's departure for the capital, and believing her cause lost unless she argued in person her claims, she decided to throw herself on Caesar's mercy. Guided by Apollodorus, a trusty chamberlain, she slipped through her own and the enemy's outposts, and took boat. It was a hazardous adventure, but all went auspiciously. The weather held, the wind was fair, and twenty-four hours later the boat lay off the port. Apollodorus waited till darkness fell, and then laid his craft alongside the palace grounds. How to pass the gates was the next problem, and Apollodorus solved it by wrapping Cleopatra within the folds of a heavy carpet, and flinging the bundle across his shoulder. He knocked at the first gate: a sleepy guard appeared, demanded to know his business. "A present for Caesar" was the quick reply, and Apollodorus passed within. The rest was easy. An accommodating servant led the way to the pavilion, and Apollodorus laid his burden at Caesar's feet.

To the adventure there could be but one ending. The man was amorous, the girl unscrupulous: Caesar espoused her cause, and Cleopatra became his mistress. The news set Alexandria quivering with shame. Had matters, then, come to such a pass that a queen of Egypt, to preserve her right, must first become the paramour of a Roman consul? Infuriated by the thought, an angry mob swarmed into the Brucchium, while Pothinus within the palace was urging the king to denounce his sister as a harlot. The boy began hastily robing, when Caesar demanded an audience. He spoke gently, begging the youthful Ptolemy to compose the differences with his sister. It was a waste of words: hearing the tumult outside, the lad ran into the great court. He was too late to join the crowd: between him and it stood a double line of Roman soldiers. Discomfited, he halted, and tearing the diadem from his brow, cried that he would never consent to share the throne with his dishonoured sister. The roar of applause that followed the words brought Caesar into the court. In his hands he held a copy of Ptolemy Auletes' testament,¹ and commanding

¹ The original was in Rome, a copy being retained in Alexandria. Caesar, *Civil War*, bk. iii., *para.* 108.

silence he read it article by article. Then refolding the scroll, he announced as consul of Rome his award. Becoming husband and wife, the elder boy and sister would share the kingdom of Egypt: out of friendship for the dynasty Rome would surrender Cyprus to the two younger children. Loud cheers followed the announcement. Egypt still lamented the loss of the island; Rome's annexation of it still rankled. Now by a miracle Cyprus had been restored, and the mob applauded Caesar as he re-entered the palace. Within its walls, it was another story. Oil and water would mate more freely than the two children of Auletes, and brother and sister eyed one another savagely. Of their ill humour Caesar took no notice: his word had been given and the pair should marry that day. The same evening the customary vows were exchanged: Cleopatra and her brother, the fourteenth of the line, sat side by side on the throne. It was a bitter spectacle to Pothinus. He had staked life and fortune upon the boy's sole succession: he was likely now to lose both. All depended upon the army still lingering at Pelusium, and he bade Achilles, the commander, hasten to the relief.

Caesar was perhaps less enamoured than the inexperienced Cleopatra imagined. She was not his first mistress, and he did not mean to tarry in Egypt for her sake. There was in fact no time to lose if he was to transport his troops safely to Italy, and he set about his preparations. News of Achilles' advance stopped them, and Caesar understood he must crush the enemy before he could embark. He took stock of his resources. The two brothers and Arsinoë, the younger sister, were safe under his hand, Cleopatra was at his side to give advice: but against these advantages he had to set off his meagre military resources. The garrison mustered no more than 4,000 officers and men, and of the reinforcements he had demanded from Asia there was as yet no sign. In point of numbers, the enemy were much better off. Achilles' contingent numbered 20,000, and Pothinus was known to be inciting the population of Alexandria to arm. It was Pothinus' death-warrant: he was arrested, cast into prison and strangled by Cleopatra's orders.

The crime stirred Alexandria into reprisal: the mob broke into the royal quarter, tore down the barricades thrown across the approaches, drove in Caesar's outposts; but a sharp sortie repaired the damage—the barricades were rebuilt, and the excitement might perhaps have died away but for Achilles' entry into the city. His strategy was astute: he decided to invest the Roman camp by land, capture by surprise the Egyptian squadron lying within the

royal port, and with it blockade the enemy by sea. But Caesar anticipated the intention: he removed the guards, set fire to the ships. The flames spread to the quay: granaries, shops and public offices were soon ablaze. Built of stone and roofed with tiles, the buildings themselves were more or less fireproof: but their contents, and in particular the manuscripts stacked in the Great Library, perished in the conflagration.

Under cover of the smoke, Arsinoë escaped to Achilles' camp. She was very welcome: with the king a prisoner in Caesar's hands, his cause badly needed a dynastic cloak. But his satisfaction was short-lived. Arsinoë's patronage was a doubtful help. A typical Ptolemy, she at once assumed the airs of a sovereign, counter-manding Achilles' orders and ignoring his advice. Suspicious presently of his loyalty, she replaced him by Ganymede, her chamberlain, who endeavoured to force a capitulation by depriving the enemy of their water. The intention failed, but Caesar had the mortification of watching his reinforcements from Asia carried past the port. He put to sea himself to conduct the convoys back, but had to fight his way to join the transports. West of the harbour an enemy squadron bore down on him, and his triremes cleared for action. The attack was beaten off, the convoy got safely into Alexandria, and flushed by the success, Caesar seized Pharos, cleared the heptastadium or mole of its defenders, and was damming its openings when Ganymede counter-attacked. Taken by surprise, the working parties flung themselves into the sea, and their escort beat a hasty retreat. Hundreds were drowned, and Caesar himself only escaped by miracle. It was Ganymede's last success: weary of his iron discipline, Alexandria ardently wished for peace. If only Cleopatra would release Ptolemy, honour would be saved, and all be well. To this end an embassy informed Caesar that Egypt "would embrace his alliance and protection,"¹ provided the king consented. It was a tempting proposal, and Caesar bade the boy make his subjects sensible of their duty. The counsel was useless: Ptolemy was hardly with his people than he vowed he would prosecute the war till either he or Cleopatra perished. But the end was approaching. Mithridates of Pergamum was hurrying to Caesar's relief, Herod of Palestine was provisioning the line of march. Off went young Ptolemy to crush Mithridates on the Nile, and in a flash Caesar was at his heels. Skirting Lake Mareotis he joined Mithridates, and the pair fell upon the Egyptian army. Driven

¹ Hirtius, *Alexandrian War*, ch. xxiii.

from the field, Ptolemy clambered on board a river boat that sank, and in the press the boy lost his life.¹

Through the crowded streets of Alexandria, preceded by a procession of priests bearing images of the national gods, Caesar, returning from battle, passed into the palace. There Cleopatra awaited him, while Caesar pardoned enemies, forgave transgressors, and conferred upon the partner of his anxieties and the mistress of his heart the sovereignty of Egypt. Thus was Cleopatra's ambition satisfied: through a combination of youth and attractiveness, of wit and impudence, she had regained a throne that seemed a month or two earlier lost for ever. Her affair with Caesar had been a tumultuous episode: a memory of hurried embraces and whispered confidences that had stimulated her feelings as a woman and her vanity as a queen.

It seemed the end of Cleopatra's dream, and the romance was over. Passion had been sated, but ambition less so. Ptolemy, the elder brother, was dead, but the younger had survived, and Cleopatra now knew well that Alexandria would challenge the rule of a woman so long as a male member of the dynasty was alive. Thus she dared not let Caesar go unless he promised to leave a guard to protect her. She hinted the need without effect. Caesar knew not how things were faring in Italy, and he was reluctant to dispense with any one of his few legions. Changing her tactics, Cleopatra sought then to persuade Caesar to remain in Egypt. If he would only consent to marriage, all would be well: Egypt would then be united with Rome, and she the queen of both. It was a foolish hope: though Caesar might trifle with other women, he was at heart faithful to Calpurnia, his wife, and he countered the ambition by recommending Cleopatra to marry the surviving brother as the surest defence of her throne. At this point she may have discovered herself to be with child, and, startled by the news, Caesar have become once more the accommodating lover. Such, very likely, was the genesis of the expedition on the Nile, an excursion that might well commend itself to Caesar. It was a river that exercised a perpetual fascination over Roman minds. Scipio and other visitors had succumbed to its lure, and Caesar, most inquisitive of men, could hardly have resisted the temptation to explore its course. Its source was a perpetual enigma, and even Acoreus, the old high priest of Memphis, an acknowledged authority, had to confess his ignorance. "Wherever the River is seen," he admitted, "it is a puzzle to men, and lying legend has not ventured to tell its

¹ Hirtius, *Alexandrian War*, ch. xxiii.

source."¹ Sesostris "driving his Egyptian chariot with kings as a yoke," Cambyzes "the madman," and Alexander "mightiest of kings" had striven and failed to unravel the riddle, and Acoreus could promise a successor no better fortune. Yet Caesar must have ardently desired to undertake the adventure.

The opportunity at least was there, for Cleopatra was bent upon conducting from Thebes to Hermonthis (the modern Armant) a new Buchis, the sacred bull of Upper Egypt. There was no reason why either she or Caesar should not go. Her throne was safe, her welcome in Upper Egypt sure: while Caesar's absence from Rome for a month or two longer was unlikely to affect the course of events. Appian records simply that "Caesar ascended the Nile with 400 ships, exploring the country in company with Cleopatra, and generally enjoying himself with her." It is likely enough that the enthusiasm of the Thebaid surprised Caesar. But the explanation was simple. Between the capital and Upper Egypt there existed a profound aversion, and a Ptolemy unpopular in the first was pretty sure of a welcome in the second.

Be this as it may, the queen seems to have stopped at Dendera, offered sacrifices in the temple shrine of Hathor, "the Lady of the Pillar," that her father had restored, and passed on to Thebes. There the new Buchis, the bull "who goes on four feet, the image of Menthu, god of war and lord of Thebes," was awaiting her arrival. Into the sacred bark of Amen the beast was presently led, and escorted by a fleet of royal and priestly boats, the ship moved up stream. At Hermonthis,² Cleopatra presided over the installation of Buchis, offered the customary sacrifices, announced an intention to build a temple of her own on a site where the illustrious Pharaohs of the Twelfth and Eighteenth Dynasties had once worshipped.

¹ Lucan, bk. x. i. 285.

² Mond & Myers, *The Bucheum*, Oxford, 1934, cite Junker, Tarn and Fairman, three notable authorities, in support of the thesis that Cleopatra presided in person.

CHAPTER XIV

CLEOPATRA

(continued)

ONCE back in Alexandria, the old misgivings overtook Caesar: he would tarry no longer in Egypt, and Cleopatra did not restrain him. Profoundly interested in the new life stirring within her, she had no ambition to visit Rome till the child was born. In midsummer she was delivered of a son, whom she proudly named Caesar. Tickled by the conceit, the wits of Alexandria nicknamed the boy Caesarion, and the diminutive stuck. More kindly, the high priest of Hermonthis proclaimed him to be the son of Amen-Rē manifested in the form of Caesar, and the treasury minted money that portrayed the mother as Aphrodite and the boy as Eros. The genealogy amused Egypt. When, it asked, had this egyptian god and a greek goddess consummated their marriage, and inquired if Alexandria was to salute this little bastard as heir to the throne, or await the arrival of a child the legitimate offspring of two Ptolemies. So long as Roman legions camped within the palace grounds, it was not difficult to answer the question, and Cleopatra's announcement that she would visit Rome dispelled the last doubt on the point.

But Caesar bade her stay awhile in Alexandria: twelve precious months had passed since Pharsalus, and he could not overtake them. The belief that he could govern Rome from Egypt had vanished: war and winter had broken communication with Italy, and not until April, 47 B.C., was the story of the siege and of Caesar's intrigue with Cleopatra known in Rome. Antony, his representative, had put a good face on both episodes: had magnified the victory and minimized the intrigue. But the Senate were puzzled, and their welcome of Caesar in the autumn was lukewarm. The political situation was none too promising, the military equally doubtful. The loyalty of the legions repatriated from Greece was uncertain. The officers were clamouring for grants of land, the rank and file for arrears of pay. Caesar interviewed the ringleaders. "No doubt, O Quirites," he said coldly, "what you say is correct. You, of course, are weary and worn out with wounds, and I have now no further use for you." Taken aback by the reproach, the soldiers said no more, and embarked with Caesar for Africa. There

in the kingdom of Numidia Scipio and Cato, two fugitives from Pharsalus, were making a last stand for Pompey's cause. They were no match for Caesar. By adroit manoeuvring he overthrew his enemy at Thapsus, and Scipio and Cato perished by their own hand. Rome rained honours on the victor. The Egyptian escapade was condoned: he was voted four separate triumphs to commemorate his exploits in Gaul, Egypt, Pontus, and Numidia. Loaded with chains, princes and commanders walked dejectedly in the procession: among the forlorn victims were Vercingetorix, king of the Averni, and Arsinoë, princess of Egypt. The Egyptian pageant was the most romantic and the most popular of the four triumphs: the spectators marvelled at a representation of the battle of the Nile, grinned at the grotesque effigies of Pothinus and Achilles, compassionated the unfortunate Arsinoë. "Too young," was the thought of the women, "too good-looking," that of the men, "to walk in a triumph." Whether Cleopatra witnessed Arsinoë's humiliation is unknown: had she been in Rome at the moment, she certainly would not have missed the spectacle. So whole-heartedly did Cleopatra hate Arsinoë that she would gladly have murdered her. It would have been easy enough to accomplish the crime: Cicero might have lamented it, but Rome was seldom concerned with the fate of the victims of war. Presumably Caesar stood between the two sisters, and Cleopatra had to postpone vengeance till a less scrupulous lover came her way.

She was at least in Rome in the autumn of 46 B.C., living with Caesar, to the despair of his gentle wife, in a handsome villa on the other side of the Tibur. Other ladies were less complaisant, speaking contemptuously of the Egyptian woman as a whore, lifting a scornful eyebrow as she crossed their path. Their sour looks amused Cleopatra: she liked being pointed out as the woman who had swept the respectably married Caesar off his feet. Incidentally, Rome of these days was not remarkable for sanctity of marriage. Men abandoned their partners and re-married without exciting comment. "If, my friends, we could manage without wives," had said the cynical censor Metellus Numidius fifty years earlier, "we should avoid the inconveniences of marriage: but since nature has ordained that we can neither live with nor live without them, we had better seek one permanent union than the pleasure of the moment." The advice was seldom followed: a permanent partnership was the last thing the youthful patrician sought.

If Cleopatra had few women friends, plenty of husbands and brothers at least flocked to the villa: her acquaintance was catholic

—the wealthy aristocrat rubbed shoulders with the out-at-elbows man of letters. Curiosity may have drawn the first, but Cleopatra's reputation for culture, exaggerated no doubt, was more likely responsible for the visits of the elegant essayist Cicero and the fashionable historian Asinius Pollio. At their heels trod the youthful poet burning to shake free from the shackles that Ennius and Plautus had imposed on verse, a budding Vergil, a Horace or a Catullus. Perhaps Cicero was the most frequent caller. In him there burnt a passion for knowledge and an ambition to elucidate obscurities of forgotten texts, and in this Queen of Egypt he expected perhaps a kindred soul. But Cleopatra was disappointing: her attention often wandered and Cicero's interminable speeches probably wearied her. She promised to procure from Alexandria certain manuscripts he wished to examine, but she did not keep the undertaking, and Cicero would not pardon the offence. "I hate the Queen,"¹ he confided to a correspondent. "Hammonius knows that I have good cause to say so," and Atticus probably sympathized with him. Cicero's bad temper mattered nothing to Cleopatra: Caesar was still her lover, she was still the confidant of his plans. He spoke of them openly to her: he talked of his desire to harmonize republican with imperial ideals, to create a government stable enough to withstand the shock of war yet independent enough to hold a just balance between the claims of the rich and the poor. At a favourable moment Cleopatra would interrupt, and turn Caesar's thoughts to her private ambition. The path of civilization, she reminded him, went through the east, followed the road traced by the great Alexander. Let Caesar then think over the moral: let him Romanize Asia and Africa as the Ptolemies had hellenized Egypt by their colonies of cleruchs, annex Parthia, and so establish an empire of the east.

The talk leaked out. It was reported that Caesar intended to transfer his capital from Rome to Alexandria: it was rumoured that he intended to marry the Egyptian woman, and legitimize their child.² It was what Cleopatra desired, no doubt; but Caesar had no intention of divorcing Calpurnia, and the gossip thus was unsubstantial. Still the whispers persisted, and the scandal became greater when Caesar placed in the family temple a statue of his mistress, and labelled it Venus Genetrix. His popularity declined also from other causes. His conduct of a campaign in

¹ Cicero, *Atticus*, xv., 15. 44 B.C.

² Suetonius says that Caesar authorized Cleopatra to name the child after him: *Jul.* 52.

Spain against the two sons of Pompey and his preparations for a campaign in Parthia affronted the republican party. It wanted no more of these adventures, and the Senate eyed the future gloomily. Better a dozen Caesars perish than the Republic be overthrown, men murmured, and conspiracy was set on foot. Of it Caesar took no notice. A mysterious illness had fastened upon him: his mind was clouded, his temper uncertain, and even Cleopatra no longer influenced him. He was not to be dragooned or cajoled at these moments, and she let him go his own way. Her own passion had perhaps sensibly cooled, or she could not have pardoned his frequent infidelities.¹ More disconcerting still was the strange megalomania that was also creeping over him, alarming to both friend and enemy. His old modesty had vanished: he listened to flattery, he welcomed the parasite. The blustering Antony fed his vanity. "Rome offers this to you through me," cried the master of horse, as he bound the diadem round Caesar's head, and Senators were shocked when Caesar made no protest. A whisper went round that the Republic was in danger. Trebellius took counsel with Cassius. Marcus and Decimus Brutus joined the pair, and the four resolved that Caesar must die in order that the Republic should live. The Ides of March drew near, and on their eve Caesar supped with Lepidus. "Tell me the best kind of death," he asked Decimus Brutus, a fellow guest, and as the false Decimus hesitated, he answered himself. "A sudden end." The following morning, the fifteenth day of the month, B.C.44, the assassins waylaid Caesar outside the Senate. One laid hold of the victim's toga, a second stabbed at the heart, and Caesar turned upon his assailants. They were too many, and, wounded in twenty-three places, he fell dead at the foot of Pompey's statue. Panic spread through the city. While some cried "Avenge Caesar," others shouted "Peace to the Republic."² The latter were the louder: the Senate assembled, condoned the murder, amnestied the assassins. The proceedings provided the time-serving Cicero with occasion to deliver one of his lengthy orations.

Hurriedly Cleopatra fled from Rome, and most people thought that her departure was a good riddance of bad rubbish. Cicero spoke out his belief and probably voiced general opinion when he vowed: "The Queen's insolence when she was living in Caesar's trans-Tiberine villa, I cannot recall without a pang." She was no

¹ Dio, bk. xliv., para. 7.

² Appian, bk. ii., para. 119.

doubt at this moment in peril of losing her life—a Senate that could forgive one crime would pardon another, and Cleopatra knew her own unpopularity. Already her statue had been torn from Caesar's family temple and broken, already her appearances abroad had produced a storm of gibes and hisses. From the friends of Caesar she could expect no protection, from the dead man's enemies no pity. Tongues wagged freely now, and it was openly said that she had instigated Caesar to become a king. She herself had no illusions left. At Caesar's feet she had laid her virtue as a woman and her honour as a queen, and the sacrifice had been in vain, since all she had achieved was no more than the empty title of "Ally and Friend of the Roman people." Caesar had not mentioned her in his will, had not commended her protection to his heirs. If the latter recalled from Egypt the Roman legions, Alexandria might depose her. Terrified by the possibility, within a month of Caesar's death she was again in Alexandria.

Starving Egypt neither welcomed nor resented her return. One low Nile had succeeded another: large areas had become infertile, and famine was universal, save where a far-seeing strategist in the first lean years had filled the local granaries. Of the number Callimachus, the virtuous viceroy of the Thebaid, had been one, as a stele set up by "the priests of the great god Amen-Rē, the elders and others," commemorating Callimachus' achievement, witnesses. This Greek was no doubt an exceptional viceroy, an honest and generous man, for "he cherished the city (Thebes) when it was in trouble in the time of famine, and unbidden brought help to the whole country."¹ But elsewhere authority had been careless, and Cleopatra strove to amend the neglect. She pawned her jewels, she bought up available stocks of grain, and distributed them freely. The collection of a new "war tax" contributed to the discontent. The decree imposing it had been carelessly drafted, and a dishonest administration took advantage of the defect to victimize the simple taxpayer. The burden became intolerable, and complaints poured into the royal letter-box. Cleopatra religiously read and answered all. Her expenses in Rome had been heavy, and she could not afford to abolish the tax; but she would not permit officials to profit illicitly from it. Ptolemaic practice concerning petitions addressed to the throne was well established. Oral complaints by individuals received an immediate decision; written

¹ Strack, *Die Dynastie der Ptolemäer*, Berlin, 1897, p. 272, No. 157, the Callimachus-Cleopatra-Caesarion stele; also Dittenberger, *loc. cit.*, vol. i., p. 275, No. 194.

complaints requiring revision or interpretation of existing decrees provoked a ruling applicable to all Egypt. Thus came about at the instance of the Bubastis nome the issue of a prostagma, or a decree, that warned the tax-farmer to keep strictly to the law in collecting the "war tax." "May it be so, and let my decree be published according to custom," curtly concluded Cleopatra.¹ Her distribution of corn and her care of the taxpayer's interests were remembered in the difficult years that lay ahead.

Surer now of her popularity, Cleopatra fell to considering the succession. So long as Arsinoë and the little brother known also as Ptolemy lived, the prospects of Caesarion, Cleopatra's beloved child, enjoying it were doubtful. By associating his with her name in decrees and proclamations, the queen believed that Egypt would grow accustomed to the idea that Caesar's son was heir-apparent and that after the mother's death the people would crown him king. But the longer her meditation, the stronger became her conviction that Arsinoë and Ptolemy would dispute Caesarion's claim, and from that belief to the determination to destroy these rivals to her son was a short step. The boy disappeared, and thus of the line there remained only Arsinoë. It was reported vaguely that this sister was out of reach now in Asia, and the queen regretted more than ever she had not overborne Caesar's scruples in Rome. For the moment there was nothing to be done but to wait on time, and trust to accident.

Meanwhile in Rome Caesar was already in a fair way to be forgotten. The Senate had amnestied the murderers, had distributed provinces among the dead man's friends and foes. Antony was given Macedonia, Marcus Brutus Cyrenaica, Decimus Brutus Cisalpine Gaul, Cassius Syria. The two last departed to their charges; but Marcus Brutus preferred to visit Athens, and Antony stayed in Rome, awaiting the arrival of Octavianus, Caesar's great-nephew and heir, from Greece. The partnership between these two men, the first a middle-aged voluptuary, the second an ascetic stripling, was not a happy one: each desired to avenge the murder, but each insisted upon being the instrument of justice. Open rupture followed: Antony withdrew across the Alps, Octavianus followed in pursuit. But Antony had joined hands with Lepidus, and the combination was too strong for Octavianus. So in Rome he came to terms with his enemy. The three men formed

¹ Stele No. 45,236, usually known as "The last decree of the Ptolemies," exhibited in Cairo Museum. See P. Collomb's *Recherches sur la Chancellerie et la Diplomatie des Lagides*. Oxford, 1926.

a triumvirate. Antony and Octavianus undertook the responsibility of crushing Brutus in Greece and Cassius in Syria, while Lepidus looked after Rome.

The campaign in Greece was postponed till the triumvirate had swept the capital clean of opposition. A savage proscription was set afoot. Every quarter of the town became a shambles: wives betrayed their husbands, mothers their sons, slaves their masters, to save their own lives. Sated at length with blood and plunder, Antony and Octavianus crossed the Adriatic, marched through Epirus, and fell on Brutus at Philippi in the autumn of 42 B.C. The battle was decisive: Cassius perished on the field, Brutus died by his own hand. Well might Horace, a humble centurion who shared the defeat, cry *Philippos et celerem fugam sensi, relictæ non bene parmula*.

Another division of power was made: Octavianus took the West as his share, Antony the East. The first returned to Rome, the second lingered awhile in Greece, having a tender regard for its people and their history. He paid Athens flowery compliments, he declared his intention to rebuild at his own expense its ruined shrines. But need of money drove him across the Hellespont, and in Asia Minor he set about plundering cities and municipalities. Everywhere he was treated with royal honours. Kings and queens, princes and princesses, hastened to court and flatter the hero of Philippi. He liked the adulation, liked even better the gifts the visitors brought. He had always been extravagant, always in debt to usurers rash enough to give him credit, always behind-hand in paying his troops. To every survivor of Philippi he had promised before the battle a reward of five thousand drachmas, but no soldier had yet seen the colour of Antony's money. A better tactician than strategist, in the field he was a bold and resolute commander, a more inspiring soldier than administrator: in the council chamber he was indolent and arbitrary, swayed by prejudice and caprice. Business was abhorrent to him: he would put off decision that he might sit on at the supper-table, watching the antics of a dancer or listening to the obscenities of a comedian. Yet the army adored and women loved him. At Ephesus he made a long halt. Girls dressed as Bacchantes and boys as fawns escorted him through the city, crying: "Way for Dionysus, Giver of Joy," and Antony vowed he had never been more handsomely welcomed. But that confession did not hinder him from requiring Ephesus to pay ten years' taxes within twelve months, and he only laughed when the local philosopher Hybreas bluntly said:

"If you can take two yearly tributes, then perhaps you can give us also a couple of summers and a double harvest time."¹ Tarsus was his next stopping place: the last resting place of Sardanapalus, whose tomb bore the proud inscription "Sardanapalus built Tarsus in one day."² It was an attractive city, washed by the waters of the Cydnus, the home of versifiers and philosophers. Boethius, one of the number, composed a song in honour of the visitor, and in return Antony appointed the author director of the gymnasium. The honour turned Boethius' head: sure of his patron's affection, he began to pilfer the pupils' rations. Taxed with the crime by Antony, the offender could find no better excuse than to plead: "Homer sang the praises of Achilles and of Agamemnon, and I yours, O Antony." Antony smiled and replied: "Yes, but Homer never robbed poor Achilles of his oil."

Into the struggle that ended at Philippi Egypt had been reluctantly drawn. Early in the duel, neutrality had become impossible, and Cleopatra had been compelled to choose between Antony in Italy and Cassius in Syria. Fate had settled that decision for her. Allienus, a tribune in Antony's service, arrived in Alexandria, harangued the garrison left by Caesar, and persuaded the three legions to march at once to the assistance of Dolabella, Antony's representative in Asia. He was equally successful in inducing Cleopatra to cover Antony's crossing of the Adriatic with a squadron. It was no moment to hesitate, and when the legions marched out of Alexandria, the squadron sailed to Brundisium. Neither adventure prospered. In Palestine the legions fell into a trap laid by Cassius and timidly capitulated: off the Peloponnese the Egyptian ships encountered a storm that forced their return to Alexandria. Thinking silence her most judicious course, Cleopatra neither offered an explanation, nor sent to Ephesus her congratulations upon the victory of Philippi. To Antony, swollen with pride, either omission was a crime, and to Tarsus he summoned the queen to account for the neglect. She was in no hurry to reply to an invitation that embarrassed her. In the beginning, circumstances had forced her to decide between two combinations, Antony and Octavianus on one side, Brutus and Cassius on the other: now it seemed that she had to choose between two individuals, Antony and Octavianus. If she obeyed the summons and went to Tarsus, Octavianus might take

¹ Plutarch's *Lives*, *Antony*.

² Strabo, bk. xiv., ch. 5.

the visit amiss: if she disobeyed it, Antony would be offended. The decision was very perplexing. Her acquaintance with the second was slight, and the first she had never met: none the less she was sufficiently conversant with the world of Rome to know that it could not contain harmoniously for long two stars of such magnitude as Antony and Octavianus, and Cleopatra could not decide between them.

She was still pondering when Dellius, the historian, came from Tarsus to remind her that Antony's patience was not inexhaustible. It was a hint rather than a threat: but Cleopatra understood very well the implication that lay behind Dellius' words. Either she must go to Tarsus and offer her humble apologies, or defy Antony to dislodge her from the throne of Egypt. Common sense forbade the alternative. Antony would crush her as surely as he had crushed Brutus: she would be treated as a prize of war and be sent to Italy to walk in a Roman triumph. The thought disquieted her, and Dellius pushed home his advantage. This suave and polished man of letters painted Antony as a good-humoured, susceptible soldier, and counselled Cleopatra to conquer him in another field. Let her become the Hera of this Roman Zeus, he urged, and Cleopatra found the suggestion agreeable enough. It was a hazardous experiment, since if she failed to please Antony she would lose all. But Macedonian blood ran in her veins, and no Macedonian woman ever shrank from risk; so, discounting the peril, she bade Dellius inform his master she accepted the invitation. Thus came about a meeting between Cleopatra and Antony that decided the fate of both. One sunny morning in 41 B.C. an Egyptian squadron hove to off the mouth of the Cydnus, and the royal barge entered the river. On the poop, sheltered by a golden canopy, lay Cleopatra, posing as an Egyptian Aphrodite, fanned by a group of boys, each a pretty Eros armed with bow and quiver. The crew, young women dressed as Nereids, took in the purple sails and bent to their silver oars that beat time to the music of flutes and harps, while the pilots, dressed as three Graces, manœuvred the rudder. Up stream the barge majestically glided to cries from the spectators of "Here is Aphrodite coming to visit our Dionysus." Such was the desire to catch a glimpse of the queen of Egypt that Antony, listening to complaints and petitions in the market-place, found himself deserted. Thinking it beneath his dignity to welcome Cleopatra on the bank, he sent an officer to command her presence that evening at his table: he was astonished to receive the reply that the queen preferred him to sup

with her. It was a memorable evening. Antony was led into a spacious marquee hung with purple curtains, he was served on gold plate incrustated with precious stones.¹ The conversation was gay, the food deliciously cooked, the wine perfectly cooled: never had he been so sumptuously entertained. From a hostess so attractive and so hospitable, he could ask no explanations, and Cleopatra volunteered none. She behaved, in short, as if she were the sovereign and Antony a favoured officer. It was the first of many similar banquets that Antony tried but failed to equal. Dellius had been right: Tarsus was Cleopatra's triumph and Antony unhappy out of her company. Experience had taught this woman how to keep an admirer on tenterhooks. She could indeed be all things to all men: imperious or submissive, passionate or distant, sagacious or artless as circumstances required. One favour only she asked from the infatuated Antony: the head of her sister Arsinoë. Escaping from Rome, Arsinoë had taken refuge in the temple of Artemis of Miletus, and from that shelter Antony's soldiers dragged and slew her. She was the last survivor of Cleopatra's brothers and sisters, all of whom had come to a violent end: Berenice in prison, the elder Ptolemy on the field of battle, Arsinoë in a temple, the younger Ptolemy by poison, on Cleopatra's return from Rome. Thus the succession was clear for Caesarion, Caesar's child, the only human being Cleopatra perhaps ever loved unselfishly.

The days sped by: summer had slid into autumn, and Antony spoke regretfully of the need of leaving her. He had in mind a raid upon Palmyra, and planned to accomplish it before winter set in. Cleopatra did not try to dissuade him: she bade him good luck in the campaign, she made him promise to spend the winter in Alexandria. It is easy to understand Antony's passion for her, seeing that his susceptibility was perpetually the talk of Rome and the despair of Fulvia, his wife: it is less easy to explain the attraction Cleopatra felt for him. She did not grant her favours lightly, nor does history associate her name with promiscuous love affairs. Perhaps a feminine desire to be admired by a man whose reputation extended from the Tibur to the Euphrates stimulated passion, perhaps the old vision of an Egyptian-Roman empire with Antony as her submissive consort excited ambition: whatever the reason, certain it is that from this point in her history, Cleopatra identified her own fortunes with those of Antony. In the struggle that she

¹ Athenaeus, bk. iv., ch. 39.

foresaw must come between Octavianus and Antony, she rashly pinned her faith to the latter. For his part Antony, who had never known so adorable a mistress, hurried his return from Palmyra to rejoin her in Alexandria. It was a city that amused this sceptical, easy-going pro-consul: a town that boasted of an immense pantheon, and of a population that in secret spoke jestingly of Isis and poked fun at Zeus. "Don't mention the gods to me in public," Stilpo had once warned a friend: "when alone, I'll tell you how much I think of them," and Alexandria still abode by that advice. But on other matters its tongue was never still. There was no quiet in this noisy city: everyone spoke at the top of his voice, no one listened. Brawls were common, the lightest word was sufficient to start a quarrel, or transform the respectable supper-party into an orgy. Chastity was more unfashionable than ever, vice more triumphant. Every temple was a haunt of prostitutes, the theatre a meeting-place where in the intervals the latest obscenity was repeated.

In this city without a soul, this capital without a conscience, Antony was at home. It was less critical of him than of Caesar, whose air of superiority had irritated the vain Alexandrian. Moreover, Antony was the guest of Egypt, and not an uninvited visitor like Caesar. Citizens also were now tolerant of Cleopatra's vagaries: if she must have a lover and a Roman at that, let her choose at least one who had the grace to leave behind his lictors and legions. Antony's simple manners suited the temper of his hosts. He laid aside the toga, wore in place the square-cut garment of the Greeks, and the white Attic shoe of the Athenian and Alexandrian priest. His behaviour in the first days was highly commended. In the Mouseion he would take a modest seat, and listen attentively to discussion between teacher and disciple: when he spoke, he did so to compliment and not to criticize as Caesar had done. But his interest in learning was pretended and he only affected it in the expectation of pleasing his mistress. Cleopatra smiled at Antony's simplicity, and liked him perhaps the better for it; but for all that she set herself to think of other ways of contenting this pleasure-loving Roman. Picnics and excursions were one expedient and, forgetting her dignity, she would carry off Antony to Lake Mareotis or to Canopus, and there participate in the panegyrics or festivals that brightened life in Alexandria. To Canopus the two would go by boat, stop at an inn half way, and watch the crowd pass. It was a jolly outing for those with money and leisure: bands of boys

and girls, singing and dancing to the notes of the flute, fathers and mothers eating and drinking till their stomachs called a halt. To Zephyrium, the extremity of the promontory, Cleopatra would lead her companion. There, washed by the sea, stood a shrine that Callicrates the admiral, two centuries earlier, had built and dedicated to the memory of the second Arsinoë, the sister-wife of Ptolemy Philadelphus, identifying the queen with the Greek Aphrodite. With the women of Alexandria the temple had a vogue, and young ladies made a pilgrimage to it at least once a year. Many laid an offering on Arsinoë's altar. Selene, one susceptible girl, deposited a nautilus, and Callimachus immortalized the gift by singing: "Once I was but a shell, but now you see in me a first offering from Selene: then I drifted on to become a toy sacred to Arsinoë in her temple." From the shrine the party would walk to the imposing temple of Serapis, identified by all Greeks with Aesculapius, god of healing. A night spent in it was deemed a certain cure for all maladies, as inscriptions demonstrate. Generous souls would leave behind a thank-offering. Callistion, daughter of Critias, did so and more, since she also engaged Callimachus to compose a dedication of her "glorious lamp with twenty wicks." It was a commission after that versatile poet's heart. He took up his pen, he addressed the future visitor thus: "O passer by! when you see my lamp, you will cry: 'How art thou fallen, oh evening star.'"¹

On other occasions Cleopatra would plan a visit to Mareotis, and the royal party would picnic on this picturesque lake, fringed by papyrus-grass and slender water-beans with their cup-shaped leaves. There the guests would land on one of the many islands that broke the surface of the lake, and gossip away the hours, or driving the bows of their boat into the heart of the rushes, doze until the sinking sun warned them to make for the shore. Then Cleopatra would bid her party repair to the palace, till Antony, a little tipsy, would stagger to his feet, call for a litter, and order the slaves to carry him to the "Happy Street," a disreputable quarter lined with cookshops, wine taverns, and bawdy houses. The other guests would follow, and drink toasts to themselves as "The Inimitable Livers" till sunrise. It was noisy entertainment: hosts and guests cursing in unison stewards and cooks, cuffing the miserable slaves who waited upon them.

¹ Epigram LV, *Greek Anthology*, tr. R. A. Furness. Cape, London, 1931.

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CHAPTER XV

CLEOPATRA

(continued)

IT is hard to believe that Cleopatra joined in these nocturnal parties. For one thing she was with child by Antony: for another they did not amuse her. Dissipation was never the besetting sin of this woman, blessed, or cursed, with a man's ambition. To Antony Alexandria was a little Paradise. He felt like a god, and his companions encouraged the belief by erecting statues in his honour. A certain Aphroditus, proudly describing himself as "the parasite," dedicated some such memorial to "Antony the Great, the Inimitable, his God and Benefactor."¹ Only the news that a Parthian army led by Labienus, a renegade Roman, was advancing on Syria forced him to leave this agreeable city. The peril was more immediate than he suspected: off Tyre he learnt that Labienus was approaching the coast, and he hastily sailed to Ephesus. There disagreeable letters awaited him. Egged on by Fulvia, Lucius, his brother in Italy, had defied Octavianus, met with reverse, and had capitulated. That was bad enough: worse still was the news that Fulvia, flying with their children from Octavianus' wrath, was in Athens awaiting him to join her. He crossed to Greece out of humour. He had no quarrel himself as yet with Octavianus, nor was he disposed to break with him to please either his wife or his brother. He treated Fulvia cavalierly, suspecting her to be at the bottom of the mischief. The conjecture was probably exact. His affair with Cleopatra was common gossip in Rome, and Fulvia no woman to pardon the scandal. Other reports trickled into Athens. Octavianus was reported to be playing false, driving Antony's partisans out of Italy, forgiving Caesar's enemies, intriguing with Sextus Pompey, the common enemy of the triumvirate, and panting for revenge, the angry Fulvia urged her husband to demand an explanation. So Antony sailed to Brundisium in the autumn of 40 B.C. to obtain it, and Octavianus hurried to meet him. Each was now jealous of and angry with the other, and it seemed as if battle alone could settle the difference. But the troops protested,

¹ Exhibit No. 42, Graeco-Roman Museum, Alexandria.

and burying their animosity the two protagonists divided afresh the empire. Illyria was now to be the boundary, Antony taking all to the East, Octavianus all to the West, while Lepidus remained in Africa. Meanwhile Sextus Pompey was in arms, Italy in danger of being invaded, the existence of the triumvirate in peril, and Octavianus appealed to Antony for help. The latter was not inclined to provide it, and he was even meditating letting his colleague bear the brunt of Sextus Pompey's attack when word came that Fulvia was dead. At once Octavianus proposed that Antony should marry Octavia, his half-sister, on the score that it would cement the triumvirate, and incidentally provide a widower with a wife and a recent widow with a husband. None the less, there could be no peace while the restless Sextus was blocking the Italian coast, and Octavianus offered his enemy terms, promising Sextus undisputed sovereignty of Sicily in return for peace. At Puteoli Sextus grudgingly agreed to treat.

Negotiation was protracted, and twelve months had passed before Antony and his bride could leave Rome and sail for Greece. Octavia was a cultured and pretty girl: an agreeable wife, no doubt, after the middle-aged, stormy Fulvia. In Athens the newly-married pair spent the winter of 39-38 B.C. happily. They lived in the beginning unostentatiously: she in perfecting her acquaintance with Greek learning, he in reorganizing his dominion in Asia, and in raising new levies and fleets. Reorganization of territory in Asia stopped in practice at reshaping principalities and replacing existing by new dynasties; but Antony contrived to so increase his military and naval resources that in the spring he could count upon twenty-four legions and three hundred warships. Meanwhile he pretended to an interest in education, professed a passion for culture: accepted the office of gymnasiarch, patronized all schools of philosophy. Athens was flattered and Antony popular enough, till he announced his wish to be known as the New Dionysus, on the score that Asia spoke of him thus. Athens lifted an inquiring eyebrow. Was Antony serious in the ambition, asked one citizen of another: surely he could not expect cultured Greece to follow the example of barbarous Asia. But Antony did not hear the question: before summer had set in he had taken the field to succour Ventidius, his lieutenant beyond the Hellespont. For a while all had gone well with Ventidius. He defeated Labienus, with his Parthian contingent, and marched to crush Labienus' ally, Antiochus of Commagene. But at Samosata he encountered a check, and Antony had to come to the relief. It was a strong place, and the siege was pro-

tracted until Antony, despairing of success, allowed himself to be bought off for a sum of three hundred talents. He returned to Athens meditating upon the punishment of Parthia, when an appeal from Octavianus reached him. He was in two minds whether to obey or ignore it. In the preceding autumn he had answered a similar prayer by going at once to Brundisium, only to discover that Octavianus did not keep the appointment. The rebuff had stung him, and but for Octavia he would now have stayed in Greece. Her entreaties carried the day: at Tarentum the two men met, renewed the triumvirate for a fresh period of five years, and declared war on Sextus Pompey. Antony sealed the pact by lending Octavianus 120 ships, Octavianus by lending Antony four legions. The ships were handed over, but Antony left Italy with only a promise that the legions would follow. He dropped Octavia in Corfu, and was himself in Syria in the summer of 37 B.C.

Accustomed to dynastic marriages, that of Antony with Octavia had neither humiliated nor angered Cleopatra: she assumed that reasons of state had dictated the match, and did not complain. There had been a moment in Alexandria when she had thought of offering her own hand to this Roman: but the reflection came to nothing owing to Antony's obvious reluctance to repudiate Fulvia or run counter to Roman prejudice concerning marriage with a foreign woman. So Cleopatra had let him go, perhaps without expressing the thought, and in the intervening years busied herself in bringing up the twins, named Alexander and Selene, she had borne to him. Other occupations had also crowded on her. Her private fortune needed repair, the army and fleet reconstruction. Egypt was rich enough now to afford both luxuries. Once again the lean years had gone, and an era of prosperity taken their place. Rome had become acquisitive of works of art and bric-a-brac of all types, and Alexandrian production was profiting from the demand. Always notorious for her handicraft, Egypt was now exporting her output in vast quantities. Statuary had declined still further.¹ Tradition was too rooted to be disturbed, and the Alexandrian sculptor of this period, poor in conception, poorer still in execution, could not break with it. His efforts to harmonize the colossal ideals of ancient Egypt with softer ideals of Greece produced only ignoble and bastard work. Painting also had fallen on evil days. Antiphilus, a jealous contemporary of Apelles, Helena, a native of Alexandria, and possibly Philoxenus, of Eritrea, who acquired fame by his

¹ *Ancient Egyptian Sculpture*, a pamphlet on C. S. Gulbenkian's collection by Sidney Smith, British Museum, 1937.

mosaic of Alexander the Great at the battle of Issus, had no followers, and the later Ptolemaic artist employed his talent in decorating interiors of houses and painting portraits from life. These portraits fulfilled a double purpose: in life they decorated the client's hall, in death they ornamented his mummified body. It was another matter with the cutting and engraving of gems, the fashioning of rings and trinkets, the chasing of bowls and goblets: all, in short, that the decadent patron of fortune and taste covets. No material came amiss to the Alexandrian craftsman: he used for his purpose gold, silver, metal, crystal, glass and obsidian indiscriminately.

Of the development Cleopatra did not take advantage and her coinage compares unfavourably with that minted by the preceding Ptolemies. The design was poor, the effect unimpressive. She posed as Aphrodite holding in her arms the infant Caesarion personified as Eros, an intimation perhaps that her son by Caesar stood next in succession to the throne. It was beyond her power, if not her inclination, to disturb the use, current in Egypt after the days of the second Ptolemy, of a copper coinage for internal and of a silver for export purposes.¹ Nor could she break loose from the fallacious belief of her predecessor that debasement of the currency was a quick way to wealth. Her silver coins were three parts alloy, her copper in value only 1/480th of the heavily depreciated silver. But currency and other humdrum problems of government seldom interest a sovereign whose mind is riveted upon extending her empire: beyond increasing the number of "royal relations," "captains of the palace guards," "friends of the throne," "the successors," and other court officers, and conferring these honorific distinctions indiscriminately upon Greeks, Italians, Persians, Syrians and Egyptians, so that the palace became almost a second tower of Babel, Cleopatra did not meddle with administration.

From Syria Antony wrote begging Cleopatra to join him: he needed her sympathy, he wanted her help. But her attitude on arrival puzzled him: in place of the accommodating queen he had known in Tarsus and in Alexandria, he found a woman cold and uninterested in his adventures. She spoke no reproaches, she asked no explanations. Meditation had strengthened her belief that Rome could not contain for ever two such disturbing personalities as Antony and Octavianus, and again weighing the chances of each, she held to her decision to support the first. But that election depended upon Antony accepting her as a partner with equal rights,

¹ Milne, J. G., *Cat.*: "Alexandrian Coins in the Ashmolean Museum."

and the Roman understood the implication. If he desired her help Cleopatra was ready to become his wife: if the reverse, she was free to reconsider her policy. It was a perplexing ultimatum for Antony. If he repudiated Octavia, he made an enemy of Octavianus, his colleague: if he married Cleopatra without the formality of divorcing Octavia, he committed bigamy, an indictable offence under Roman law. But he was no man to hesitate long. Cleopatra was in Syria, Octavia in Italy, and with Antony it was always the woman in his company who triumphed. One condition he perhaps stipulated: the ceremony must be performed according to Egyptian ritual, and through that loophole he hoped to escape in Roman eyes the consequence of his offence. Cleopatra offered no objection. Her conditions had been met, and she cared very little what Rome thought or said. The marriage would be legal enough in the East, and that was sufficient for her. Always greedy of territory, she hankered after the handsome dowry Antony promised her—Cilicia, Coelesyria, Cyprus, Transjordan and Jericho.

The ceremony took place in the winter of 37-36 B.C. The honeymoon was brief: Cleopatra had a fancy to visit her new dominion, and Antony was making ready for his coming campaign in Parthia. In the spring he set off to the Euphrates. Cleopatra accompanied him to Zeugma, and then turned back: she was again with child and determined to be delivered in Alexandria. But first she intended to visit two of her new possessions, Jericho and Transjordan: valuable sources of revenue, yet too distant to exploit from Alexandria. So Cleopatra decided to lease the bitumen fields of the second to Malthus the Nabatean, the balsam and palm plantations of the first to Herod of Jerusalem. It was hard bargaining with the latter; but Cleopatra could hold her own with any prince, Jew or Gentile, and perhaps the two hundred talents he finally offered, and she accepted, were a fair rental.

Parthia was a disaster. Antony was in too great a hurry: he lost his siege-train early in the campaign, and Artavasdes of Armenia, his ally, deserted. The farther the Roman legions advanced the greater grew their difficulties. Every yard of ground was stubbornly contended. The enemy's archers and horse hung on to the flanks and rear: hunger and disease thinned the ranks. Reluctantly Antony gave the signal to retire, and before long the retreat became almost a rout. It was a terrible experience that ended only in Phoenicia. There the survivors found a refuge from pursuit, there Cleopatra met Antony with clothing and money. He had lost half his army, but not all hope, and indeed misfortune never

destroyed Antony's spirit. He enrolled fresh levies, spoke of a glorious and bloody vengeance. In vain Cleopatra protested that Octavianus was his real enemy, in vain she urged that Rome would hold him responsible for his disastrous Parthian campaign. Antony would not listen, or do more than consent to spend the summer in Alexandria, and in Egypt he remained until news came that Octavia with reinforcements and supplies was coming to Athens. It was Cleopatra's chance to triumph over this woman. If Antony must wipe out his disaster in Parthia, she would let him go: but meet Octavia in Greece he should not, and in Athens Octavia found a letter from Antony commanding her to return to Rome. Cleopatra's will had been the stronger.

Antony revised his strategy: using Armenia as his base, he proposed to penetrate Parthia from the north in place of the west. But he got no further than occupying the territory of the first. An ominous message from Alexandria caught him as he was about to enter the second: Rome had disowned him and, repudiating his conquest of Armenia, was denouncing him as enemy of the Republic. It was surprising news, but Antony did not doubt its truth. Octavianus was unlikely to show him mercy, nor did the careless Antony expect or want it. If this stripling wished for war, he could have it for the asking. None the less Antony was sufficiently impressed by the news to break off the campaign and go back to Alexandria, to prepare for the coming conflict. He re-entered the city in October, 34 B.C. At the Gate of the Sun Cleopatra awaited the returning warrior, and the pair passed through the streets into the gymnasium packed with spectators. In their presence Antony and Cleopatra took their seats on two golden thrones set on a silver platform. On lower thrones were Caesarion and Antony's elder children by Cleopatra; behind the parents stood the miserable Artavasdes of Armenia and his officers, captives of war. A herald commanded silence, and Antony read his will in audible tones. The audience listened with bowed heads to a division of the Egyptian empire. To Cleopatra with Caesarion as co-sovereign passed Egypt, Cyprus and Coele Syria: to Alexander, Antony's eldest son, surnamed Helius, Armenia, Media and Parthia when conquered. To the younger son, the last-born child, named Ptolemy Philadelphus, went Phoenicia, Syria and Cilicia, and to Selene, the daughter, Libya and Cyrenaica as dowry. He saluted the two boys as Kings of Kings, he bade them do obeisance to their mother. The children, the elder dressed as a Parthian and the younger as a Macedonian, put on their tiaras, rose from their

thrones and bowed, and once more the herald commanded silence. Then Antony called the people of Alexandria to witness that Cleopatra had been the lawful wife of Caesar, that Caesarion, as their legitimate son, was the heir-apparent of Egypt.

Public opinion in Rome, already outraged by news of Antony's bigamous marriage, was still further incensed by reports of his division of territory conquered in the name of the Republic. An acrimonious correspondence begun by Octavianus did not smooth matters. He accused Antony of deserting Octavia, of being the lover of an Oriental woman, of tampering with the reputation of Caesar. Antony answered curtly that Cleopatra was not his mistress but his wife, that he was still awaiting the four legions Octavianus had promised him at Tarentum. He followed up the letter by inviting the Senate to ratify his acts and decisions, by undertaking to surrender his authority as a triumvir if Octavianus would do so also. Perhaps the consuls of the day, Sossius and Ahenobarbus, both partisans of Antony, did not dare read to the Senate the letter, and certainly they must have had difficulty in defending Antony's association with Cleopatra: yet in one way or another its contents became known, and Italy realized that the moment had come when every citizen must choose between Octavianus and Antony. Appreciating that knowledge, Sossius and Ahenobarbus joined Antony at Ephesus, and with them went a number of senators.

Nothing could now avert war, and in Ephesus during the summer of 33 B.C. Antony and Cleopatra made no secret of their intentions. Egypt had been swept high and dry to provide the sinews of war, as a fleet of 200 ships, a war treasure of 20,000 talents, and twelve months supply of corn indicated. Antony welcomed the coming struggle for supremacy, and so confident was Cleopatra of the issue that she prefaced now her decisions by the oath "as surely as I shall dispense justice from the Capitol." Her judgment for once was astray. Rome perhaps was too small to hold Antony and Octavianus, but her belief that the latter's star would be the first to decline was ill-founded, and she did not appreciate how profoundly Italy distrusted and disliked her. At Ephesus she behaved as if she were already Queen of Italy. She replaced her household guards with Italian legionaries, she ordered her name to be inscribed on their shields: she spoke of army headquarters as "the palace," and of Antony as her commander-in-chief. Such was her vanity that she commissioned artists to paint Antony and herself as Osiris and Isis, and sculptors to portray the pair as Dionysus

and Selene. It was a choice that flattered Egyptian vanity. Auletes had claimed to be an incarnation of Dionysus, Cleopatra pretended to be an incarnation of Selene, symbolizing prosperity in life, tranquillity after death. When she moved abroad she reclined in a litter preceded by her eunuchs, miserable creatures in Roman eyes, while Antony walked deferentially a pace or two in the rear. To her Asia was a prize of war, and she treated it as such. She requisitioned treasure, she sent from Pergamum to Alexandria many of its priceless manuscripts and works of art. Her airs also angered the senators who had fled from Rome—did this degenerate woman imagine that free-born Romans would bow their knees to her?—and they urged Sossius and Ahenobarbus to bid Antony send Cleopatra back to Egypt. Antony sulkily promised; but in Cleopatra's hands he was as wax, and incontinently he broke his word.

In the spring of 32 B.C. he crossed to Samos and there spent the summer. Apart from Cleopatra's presence, he was in no hurry to provoke Octavianus to extremities. Conquest of Asia Minor had not transformed him into an Oriental, nor had marriage with Cleopatra made him an Egyptian. A Roman he had been born, and a Roman he was determined to die. Thus he dallied in Samos without a thought of the future. Life on the island was a repetition of life in Ephesus or in Alexandria: one pageant succeeded another with Cleopatra the queen of the revels. It was a poor preparation for war, and summer had passed into autumn before Antony sailed with the vague intention of raiding Italy. But off Corfu he learnt of the presence of enemy ships in the Adriatic, and steered for Athens. He was no longer the resolute soldier of Philippi, or even of Parthia: he was in middle age, and indulgence had left its mark upon both body and mind. Something of this was suspected in Rome, for hardly a week now went by that some distinguished senator deserting Antony did not re-appear in Rome to offer his services to Octavianus. It was Plancus who reported Antony's impudent instructions concerning his burial, it was Calvisius who spoke the loudest of Antony's scandalous subservience to Cleopatra. There was some truth in the denunciation. Life in Athens was a replica of life in Ephesus and in Samos, and the behaviour of Antony and Cleopatra shocked respectable people. The second placed a statue of herself as Selene on the Acropolis, the first publicly repudiated his Roman wife Octavia. That announcement created a sensation in Rome, and tearing a copy of Antony's testament from the Vestal Virgins to whom Plancus had confided it, Octavianus read parts to the horrified Senate. "When I die," wrote

Antony, "let me be carried in triumph through the Forum, and my body be burnt in Alexandria by the side of Cleopatra." Some senators called for the death of Antony: others, more charitable men, pitied him as a Roman bereft of his senses, and with his customary caution Octavianus compromised by declaring war upon Cleopatra alone.

He followed up the announcement by inviting Antony to decide their differences on Italian soil, promising him a safe conduct across the sea. It was an adventure, and Antony liked the suggestion. The quarrel would then be a personal one, and he asked no more than to punish this impertinent colleague. He would have sailed at once, but for the knowledge that Octavianus' safe conduct apparently excluded Cleopatra. The reflection made him hesitate. He would have to explain his departure, and even if she approved of the intention, he hardly dared sail alone, so accustomed was he now to lean upon his partner's advice. Unhappily Cleopatra's presence would ruin the campaign, and Antony was sensible enough to know it. He was aware of Rome's judgment upon her: how its citizens thought of her as an evil woman, a worshipper of false gods, a seducer of noble-minded Romans; he guessed that her re-appearance on Italian soil would be worth a dozen legions to Octavianus. All this and more must have passed through Antony's mind as he sought words to explain his perplexity, until Cleopatra, reading his thoughts, counterstruck by bidding him think twice before he sailed. Was not this Octavianus who promised a safe conduct the same deceitful Octavianus who had undertaken to provide Antony with four legions in exchange for a squadron of ships: since he had broken his word on that occasion, was he likely to keep it on this? More probably he offered his safe conduct only to persuade Antony to embark his troops, with the intention of swooping on the transports in mid-ocean, burning the ships, and drowning the passengers. That would be the end of Antony's dream of victory, and, she may have hinted, the end also of her relations with him. If then he persisted in accepting Octavianus' invitation, she would withdraw her ships from his fleet and herself return to Egypt.

It was another ultimatum that ended argument as the first had done at Ephesus, and Antony spoke no more of adventure in Italy. But behind Cleopatra's words lay a double meaning. She was more weary now of these perpetual advances and halts, these eternal pageants and festivals, than Antony suspected. Ephesus had been an amusing experience, Athens less so, and she

was consumed with a passionate desire to be back in Alexandria. The opinions of commoner people rarely influenced her judgement, but in Greece she recognized her extreme unpopularity among Antony's friends. Nor was this all. Her arrogant pretensions to sovereignty mortified also the kings and princes of Asia who marched with Antony, and her constant interference in the conduct of the campaign offended Antony's military advisers. Possibly also physical causes contributed to her capricious changes of mind. She was approaching the age of forty, a dangerous period in a woman's life, when whim replaces reflection and irresolution decision.

That hypothesis perhaps may serve to explain in part Cleopatra's attitude during the weeks preceding the battle of Actium. Classical authority is silent on the point; but it is possible that Cleopatra conceived at this point the idea of withdrawing to Alexandria and taking Antony with her. The task was difficult. Antony was a soldier, and to a soldier desertion in the face of an enemy is a heinous crime. Yet, as the end shows, Cleopatra must have persevered, gently but firmly chiding her companion's timidity and obtuseness. A strategic retirement was in her mind. Part of the army would remain in Greece to garrison vital points, and the fleet would remain in Epirus waters to cover the coast-line, while the bulk of the troops, re-crossing the Hellespont, would occupy Syria, and once back in Alexandria Antony could leisurely consider the conquest of Parthia. As master of Parthia he would have the whole East at his mercy, and, drawing freely upon its resources, could attack with the certainty of victory Octavianus in Italy. Some such suggestion she may have made and Antony, in principle, have accepted. Memory of the recent disaster in Parthia must have been still fresh, and the prospect of obliterating it in a second campaign have fortified Cleopatra's reasoning.

Yet he would promise no more than to consider the proposal, and his decision was still uncertain when reports that Octavianus was massing troops and transport at Brundisium preparatory to crossing the Adriatic compelled him to transfer his headquarters from Athens to Patras and hurry up his reserves from Asia Minor. Some of them were too distant to hear the call in time, others lingered on the way. None the less he could count upon a formidable army collected from all corners of his Asiatic possessions, a menacing if heterogeneous force of perhaps a hundred thousand horse and foot, whose strength would have been greater had not he wasted so many legions on lines of communication. Egypt and

Cyrenaica apparently needed between them a garrison of four or five, Syria another three, Asia Minor half a dozen others: a sad misuse of men, and only intelligible on the hypothesis that Antony thought more of the safety of his communications with Egypt than capture of Italy. His naval strategy was scarcely more judicious. He had good reason to believe his fleet superior to any Octavianus could muster; but in place of keeping it at sea to prevent a junction between the enemy's squadron based on Corcyra (Corfu) and the enemy's ships escorting Octavianus' army over the Adriatic, he foolishly permitted his admiral to shelter in the gulf of Arta, a landlocked harbour of Epirus. There the fleet was no doubt safe from attack: on the other hand, since outlet to the open sea was through a narrow strait of water, an enterprising enemy was in a position to immobilize the ships.

Agrippa, Octavianus' admiral in Corcyra, had a clearer conception of the use of a fleet. Throughout the winter of 32-31 B.C. he had patrolled the coast and kept an eye upon the enemy lying in Arta. During these months no ship entered the gulf or issued from it, and so close was the blockade that in the spring Octavianus slipped across the sea unnoticed, landed troops, and occupied undisturbed the high ground to the north of the gulf. Simultaneously Agrippa brought up his entire fleet, and the concentration that Octavianus had designed and Cleopatra had doubted was accomplished before Antony, idle at Patras, had a hint of the fact. It imperilled the fleet lying in Arta, and Antony hastened his land concentration. The soldiers were badly needed, for the ships were hardly in a condition to undertake an engagement, and some of them doubtfully able to put to sea. During the long winter discipline on board had sadly deteriorated. Crews had deserted bodily; the fleet needed overhauling and stores were lacking. Agrippa, on the other hand, had served his master well. He had kept his ships in fighting trim and officers and crews were panting to strike at the enemy. But Octavianus was cautious. His only communications with Italy were by sea, and, not daring to risk their interruption, he left the initiative to his enemy. Such was the situation when Antony and Cleopatra, reaching the front, pitched their camp at Actium on the southern shore of the passage from sea to gulf. Antony's first objective was very obvious. So long as the enemy lay extended on the farther side of the passage, the safety of the fleet at anchor within the gulf was uncertain, and once he felt strong enough to dislodge Octavianus, he crossed the water and fell on his antagonist. But the latter was prepared. He had fortified his

camp, and though its outworks were carried, the defence stubbornly held out. The attack, in short, had failed and, losing heart, Antony withdrew to Actium.

It was a grave error: but Antony's strategy had been at fault. He was a second-rate commander, as his conduct of the Parthian campaign demonstrated: inclined to vacillate when decision was required, to act when delay was needed. His courage in short was undeniable, his leadership more doubtful. Once his fleet had entered the gulf of Arta he should have secured both shores of the passage into it, and so denied them to the enemy. A fatal hankering after pleasure had killed his military instinct. Two summers had been wasted in Ephesus and Samos and a winter in Athens on frivolous amusement, and he was to pay a heavy penalty for the folly. He was also at fault in the choice of Actium as a camp. It was no place for large bodies of troops in the summer months. The neighbourhood was unhealthy, the country bare, malaria prevalent; food ran short, and the men scattered to avoid starvation. Octavianus was little better off: his troops on shore were also short of supplies, and his crews at sea weary of incessant patrol duty. The situation in fact was nearing a state of stalemate, and clearly something had to be done to end it. It was at this moment perhaps that Cleopatra again spoke of the wisdom of withdrawing the army and leaving to the fleet the task of keeping Octavianus occupied. Superior in numbers and in size, Antony's ships, handled boldly, should surely be able to accomplish that service at the worst, or crush the enemy in a naval engagement at the best. The argument was substantial and, overcome by Cleopatra's persistence, Antony capitulated. At a council of war he announced his intention to give battle to the enemy at sea. "I have chosen," he cried, "to begin with the ships that are vastly superior to the enemy, so that after victory we may scorn also their infantry."

A silence fell on his officers. Was Antony, a general who had never in his life fought a battle at sea, out of his senses, or was the decision that of his sinister partner, the Queen of Egypt? Such was the thought of every Roman present, and Ahenobarbus insolently asked if victory was to be sacrificed to the whim of a woman. Let Antony remember Philippi, he called out, and trust to the valour of his legions. Antony did not condescend to notice the interruption. He announced his battle orders coolly and, dismissing the council of war, retired to his private camp. Ahenobarbus said no more; but that night he passed over to the enemy.

Ahenobarbus' surmise was right in one respect, wrong in another.

Antony was inexperienced in naval business: thus Cleopatra probably was responsible for the decision to fight at sea. It was no doubt the only way now she herself could escape from Epirus and carry off Antony. Her plan was simple. Passing out of the gulf of Arta at the heels of Antony's big ships, the Egyptian squadron would sheer off once battle was forced; then, when out of call, the squadron would heave to, take on board Antony, and lay a course for Africa. She may not have disclosed the details to Antony, she may even have encouraged him to hope for victory at sea: but her mind was made up, her decision final. Vacillating to the last, Antony surveyed his fleet. It certainly needed attention. Many ships from lying so long at anchor had become unseaworthy, others could not put out for lack of rowers. Disease and desertion also had played havoc with the crews. Under the spur of necessity Antony's drooping energy revived. He acted drastically: burnt a third of the fleet, transferred to surviving ships their complements, embarked 20,000 legionaries to act as marines, and ordered commanders to unstep the masts and send ashore the sails.

At dawn on the 2nd September, 31 B.C., Antony's fleet, dropping their moorings, crept out to sea and deployed into line. Led by Cleopatra, there followed the Egyptian squadron, faster and more lightly armed craft, which on a signal from the leader edged off to the left flank of the turreted ships of the fleet. On the other side Octavianus' squadrons, drawn up in battle formation, confidently awaited attack. It was slow in coming. Difficult to steer and unwieldy to manoeuvre by reason of their size and top-hamper, Antony's great ships were slow in forming line and, marking the confusion, Octavianus signalled his centre to engage the enemy. At once a swarm of Liburnian galleys darted to the front. Round the turreted ships they clustered in companies of twos and threes, smashing their victims' oars, ramming their hulls. Encumbered with engines of war and overcrowded with marines, the giants could not shake off their pigmy antagonists, and were thus at a disadvantage when the action became general. It was a fight to a finish. No quarter was asked or given: a ship went to the bottom and, sheering off, the victor passed to his next prey. Short of light craft themselves, Antony's captains had counted upon the Egyptian ships to meet the deficiency, and when the fight was at its hottest they looked anxiously for their ally. It was to no purpose: Cleopatra's squadron had worked round the flank of friend and enemy, and when beyond the possibility of recall or pursuit, had hove to.

Ignorant of seafaring business, Antony had left the conduct of his fleet to subordinates. He had accompanied the ships to sea, and then taken up a position on the left wing, where he could watch the course of the battle. His soul was ill at ease, and his hope that Cleopatra at the last moment would relent vanished when he marked her ships creeping to the open sea. Thus the hour had come when he must decide between duty and dishonour, and he chose the latter. Ten years earlier he had left Cleopatra light-heartedly for Brundisum: it was beyond his power to do so now. The next moment he was steering for the Egyptian ships that lay in the offing, rocking on their oars to a gentle swell. He was taken on board, sail was set, and a course laid for Africa. Once again Cleopatra had triumphed.

For three days and nights Antony sat in the prow of the flagship, a prey to the remorse that overtakes all deserters. There he remained blind and deaf to all about him till a waiting-woman, touching his shoulder, repeated a message from the queen. It was to no purpose: Antony would only wave the messenger away, and the woman withdrew. A second girl had better fortune: Antony rose and staggered aft to the great cabin where sat Cleopatra gaily talking with her ladies. She welcomed Antony as if nothing had happened. She bade him eat and drink, she talked incessantly of their joint plans in Egypt, of the victory he would enjoy over Parthia in the coming summer. Still Antony's gloom did not lighten and, perceiving words were wasted, she counselled him to disembark at Paraetonium. There lay a legion, and Antony at its head could enter Alexandria in triumph. Her advice was taken and, exchanging ships, Antony left Cleopatra to land alone at Alexandria. Rid now of her melancholy companion, the queen sent ahead a dispatch boat to announce her return to Egypt following a glorious triumph over Rome. It was welcome news, and Alexandria flocked to the harbour to congratulate Cleopatra on it. To heighten the illusion the ships entered the port bedecked with garlands, while to the accompaniment of flutes the rowers chanted songs of victory.

Meanwhile Antony had landed safely within a few miles of Paraetonium and had despatched messengers to sound the garrison. Their reception was discouraging: the commander disbelieved the story of victory in Greece, and counselled Antony to re-embark if he wished to save his life. Nothing was to be gained by remaining in Libya and the disconsolate Antony rejoined Cleopatra in Alexandria. It was a cheerless city. An inkling of the truth had escaped: it was reported that this boasted victory had been in fact a disas-

trous defeat. At the street corners citizens stood in groups reflecting on their fate should Octavianus pursue Cleopatra to Egypt. Then Alexandria would have to suffer for the sins of the queen, and its citizens pay the price for her passion for Antony. It was rash to whisper even such thoughts. Cleopatra took a savage pleasure in punishing the speakers: suspicion was sufficient to send a man to death and the innocent suffered with the guilty. Men were cast into prison and strangled without formality of trial: their property was seized and sold by the state. The money was badly needed to strengthen the army and increase the fleet.

Reliable news was now trickling into Alexandria. It was now known that the sea-fight off Actium had ended in the destruction of Antony's fleet and the dispersal of his army: it was rumoured that Octavianus was punishing the kings and princes in Asia Minor who had assisted his enemy, and Cleopatra trembled lest Octavianus should occupy Syria. From Antiochia to Pelusium was an easy march, and her own safety would be at stake. If Pelusium fell she dared not remain in Alexandria. She knew the lot of queens who failed to defend their dominions, and she studied ways and means to escape the penalty. Spain was one alternative, Arabia a second. To Spain she despatched agents to prepare the way: across the isthmus of Suez she dragged sufficient ships to carry her down the Red Sea. Meanwhile she hurried such troops as she had to Pelusium, and to stimulate its garrison she sent her beloved Caesarion to the front.

Antony neither helped nor hindered these measures. His resolution was gone, his mind a blank. In the harbour on a rocky islet he built a refuge, and in it he sat for days on end a recluse, imitating Timon of Athens, whose epitaph, "Timon the misanthrope, lie I here below: Go and revile me, Traveller, but only Go," the inimitable Callimachus had written. Certainly all news that reached Alexandria now was disheartening: Octavianus, it was said, was approaching Syria, was receiving the homage of the kingdoms and municipalities whom Antony had enriched and liberated. Meanwhile Cleopatra kept her head, though she was no more able to dispel Antony's melancholy in Alexandria than she had been in the flight from Actium: but she laughed at his solemn face, bade him to be merry while life lasted, and urged him to join a circle she spoke of as "the Diers Together." At heart she was no more sure of the future than he, nor could she make up her mind to fly. Death occurred to her as an alternative, and she began to study the action of poisons on the human body, to discover the most rapid and least painful of them. On one point at least her decision

was unshakeable: she would walk in no Roman triumph, nor die miserably in any Roman prison. It is possible at this juncture that she thought of bewitching Octavianus as she had bewitched Caesar and Antony, and the reflection may have persuaded her to ask Octavianus' acceptance of the Egyptian crown and sceptre. From Tyre Octavianus answered the letter: he kept the gifts, but hinted that Antony's death would be her best passport to his favour. Antony came to hear of the correspondence, and following the example also wrote to Octavianus, declaring his willingness to resign his offices, asking only to be permitted to live as a simple Roman citizen. Octavianus did not condescend to reply, and by the silence Antony knew himself to be a doomed man.

The net was closing upon the pair: Pelusium was invested, the garrison of Paraetonium on the march to Alexandria. That news roused Antony at last. At the head of a handful of troops still loyal to his cause he sallied out to crush the threat from the west. It was too late. Pelusium had fallen, and Octavianus by dint of rapid marching was within sight of Alexandria. Hurrying back, Antony discovered the enemy's advance guard in occupation of the hippodrome, and their cavalry bivouacking in the Bruchium. A fierce counter-attack drove the latter back on their infantry supports, and battle was ordered for the following day. But Antony's bolt was shot: first his ships and then his cavalry passed over to the enemy, and he rode off the field.

The end was near. In his apartment he sat awaiting a word from Cleopatra, but none came till nightfall, when a messenger staggered in, crying that the queen was dead. Overcome with shame that he had lived to hear the news, Antony swore to die too. The story was a lie. Octavianus' hint lingered in her memory, and to save her own life Cleopatra had fabricated the message. Distractedly Antony loosed his armour, and sobbing "Ah, Cleopatra, I shall soon be with you," bade Eros, his faithful freedman, kill him. But Eros could not slay in cold blood a master he loved so well. He drew his dagger, raised his hand as if to strike, and then, turning swiftly round, he plunged the point into his own breast. "Well done, well done," muttered Antony, as Eros fell on his face stone dead, "you have shown your master how to do what you had not the heart to do." But his own thrust was more clumsy, and he fell back screaming to be put out of pain. To Cleopatra, entrenched in a stronghold adjoining the temple of Isis, a servant brought the news, and repentance overtook her.

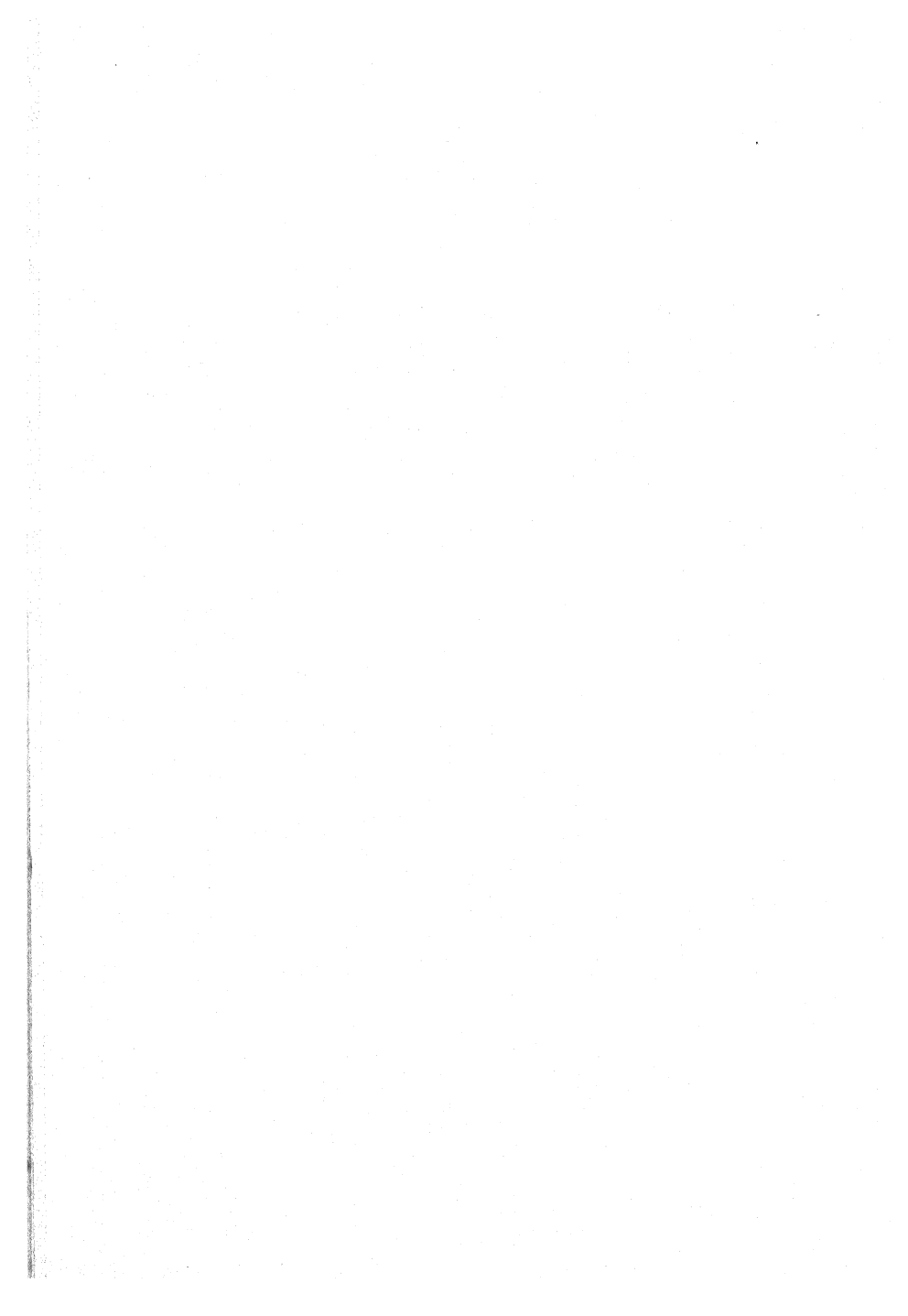
Antony's apartment to her refuge, and with the aid of her maids pulled Antony through a window. She was on her knees at his side, kissing his bloody limbs, when he died.

Unlike Caesar, who wept when told of the manner of Pompey's end, the cold-blooded Octavianus heard the news composedly. It was convenient enough, since he could now devote his whole attention to Cleopatra. His mind was running upon the jewels and plate she had in her stronghold, and thinking it beneath his dignity to storm the little fortress, he turned to stratagem. While one officer held the queen in conversation at one window, a second entered by another. "Unhappy Cleopatra, you are made prisoner," shrieked a maid to warn her mistress, and drawing a dagger Cleopatra would have stabbed herself. The officer snatched the weapon from her hands. "Cleopatra," he said gently, "you wrong yourself and Caesar." None the less the stronghold was in Octavianus' hands, the treasure inventoried and removed, and Octavianus himself came later to the queen, promising to spare her children, permitting her to bury Antony. His speech was fair, but his heart was hard, and he did not keep his word. He slew Caesarion, a fugitive from Pelusium caught on the way to Ethiopia, and Antyllus, Fulvia's son, who had joined his father Antony in Alexandria. "Too many Caesars are not well," cynically said the philosopher Areius, Octavianus' secretary and Octavianus understood the moral. Bitter tears filled Cleopatra's eyes as she paid honour to the shades of Antony. Garlanding the tomb, she sobbed "Ah, Antony, no further offerings must you expect from me! But if the gods below, with whom you are, will do anything, let me not be led in triumph to your shame, but hide and bury me here with you."

She had now no more wish to live, and returning home she bathed, supped, and wrote her last letter. It was addressed to Octavianus; it asked that in death she might lie with Antony. A basket of figs was brought to her: under the fruit there lay coiled a hooded snake, the deadly viper. She caught it by the neck, and held it to a vein of her bosom. The poison worked: sleepily she sank back on the couch, and quietly died. Meanwhile Octavianus had read the letter and, divining Cleopatra's intention, warned the guard and bade its officer keep a watch on his prisoner. It was too late. Breaking open the door of the chamber, he saw the queen stretched upon a golden bed, and Iras, a waiting woman, lying at her mistress' feet. He laid his finger upon Cleopatra's wrist. It was cold to the touch: the queen beyond all doubt was



Cleopatra, with viper at her bosom
(From a gem in the Soane Museum, London)



dead. He turned to Charmion, a second maid. "Was this well done of your lady?" he asked angrily. "Excellently well," faintly answered Charmion, straightening the diadem that bound Cleopatra's hair, "and as becomes the descendant of many kings." They were Charmion's last words: a moment later she was dead too.¹

Thus died Cleopatra on the 29th August, 30 B.C., in the thirtieth year of her age, a redoubtable queen, a notable woman, last of a line of kings and queens more remarkable for virility than virtue. But judgement must take into account the standards of the times, and considered from that angle the Ptolemies compare favourably with their neighbours. It was a vicious age: murder was a commonplace at every court, megalomania the inspiration of every ruler, corruption the besetting sin of every government. Yet if the Ptolemies exploited their subjects without compunction and warred without excuse, they did so with greater discretion than other princes. A whisper of discontent hurried them into redress of grievances, a hint of rebellion sent them scampering home from a campaign. It is also to the credit of the Ptolemies that despite a selfish rule they contrived to pass the succession from one to another for three centuries, an achievement unprecedented in the annals of Egypt. That good fortune was due no doubt to their persistent courtship of the priesthood. Theocracy was the oldest social organization in Egypt, and, following the example of the Pharaohs, the Ptolemies sagaciously patronized it.

Occasionally vicissitude would overtake a particular Ptolemy, whose misgovernment or way of life excited national temper. But the king's person was sacrosanct, and the culprit had always time to slip off to Cyprus or Syria, where he would await patiently a message of recall. The expectation was never disappointed. Memories were short, tempers would cool: the exile's crimes would be condoned, and his return to Egypt be welcomed. His subjects were very forgiving. The women of the family were more circumspect: with the exception of the third and the seventh Cleopatra, history associates their names with no crimes or lovers. Yet, lacking the opportunities of the men, they usually played a humiliating part: marrying husbands one day, repudiating them the next at the command of a father or brother.

¹ Plutarch (*Life of Antony*) and Dio (*Roman History*, bk. li., 12) differ in their account of Cleopatra's last days. The second asserts that by order of Octavianus, Cleopatra was removed to the royal palace, where she died. That led Neroutsos Bey (*Ancienne Alexandria*, ch. xiii.) to place Cleopatra's tomb on the sea-shore and adjoining the temple of Isis.

Infected with a common obsession, Ptolemy Soter relied upon dynastic marriage to consolidate his authority. It proved a broken reed, and his successors pursued the Pharaonic practice of marrying sisters, the traditional and popular custom of ancient Egypt. Less intelligible was Ptolemaic foreign policy in the first half of the dynasty. Its corner-stone was intervention in the quarrel between Macedonia and Greece, and the policy persisted until Rome cast a sinister eye upon the East. The end was slow but sure. Macedonia, Greece, Asia Minor, Syria, and finally Egypt, passed into the keeping of Rome.

Thus disappeared from history the Ptolemies, a family that had once boasted of being "ally and friend of the Roman people": a melancholy instance of the instability of kingship.



BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE.

LITERATURE dealing with the period covered by the Ptolemies of Egypt is very extensive, and an exhaustive bibliography would be superfluous to the purpose of this book. Incomplete, all bibliography is misleading, and in this belief the author prefers to remind the reader only of the works published by the following writers, viz.: Bevan, Tarn, Grenfell, Hunt, Smyly, Petrie, Milne, Griffith, Rostovtzeff, Edgar, Macurdy, Bouché-Leclercq, Jouguet, Lesquier, Lumbroso, Breccia, Wilcken, Mitteis, Strack, Dittenberger, Schubart, Plaumann, Preisingke, and the classical authors mentioned in the footnotes.

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